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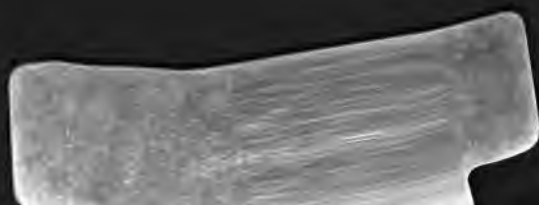
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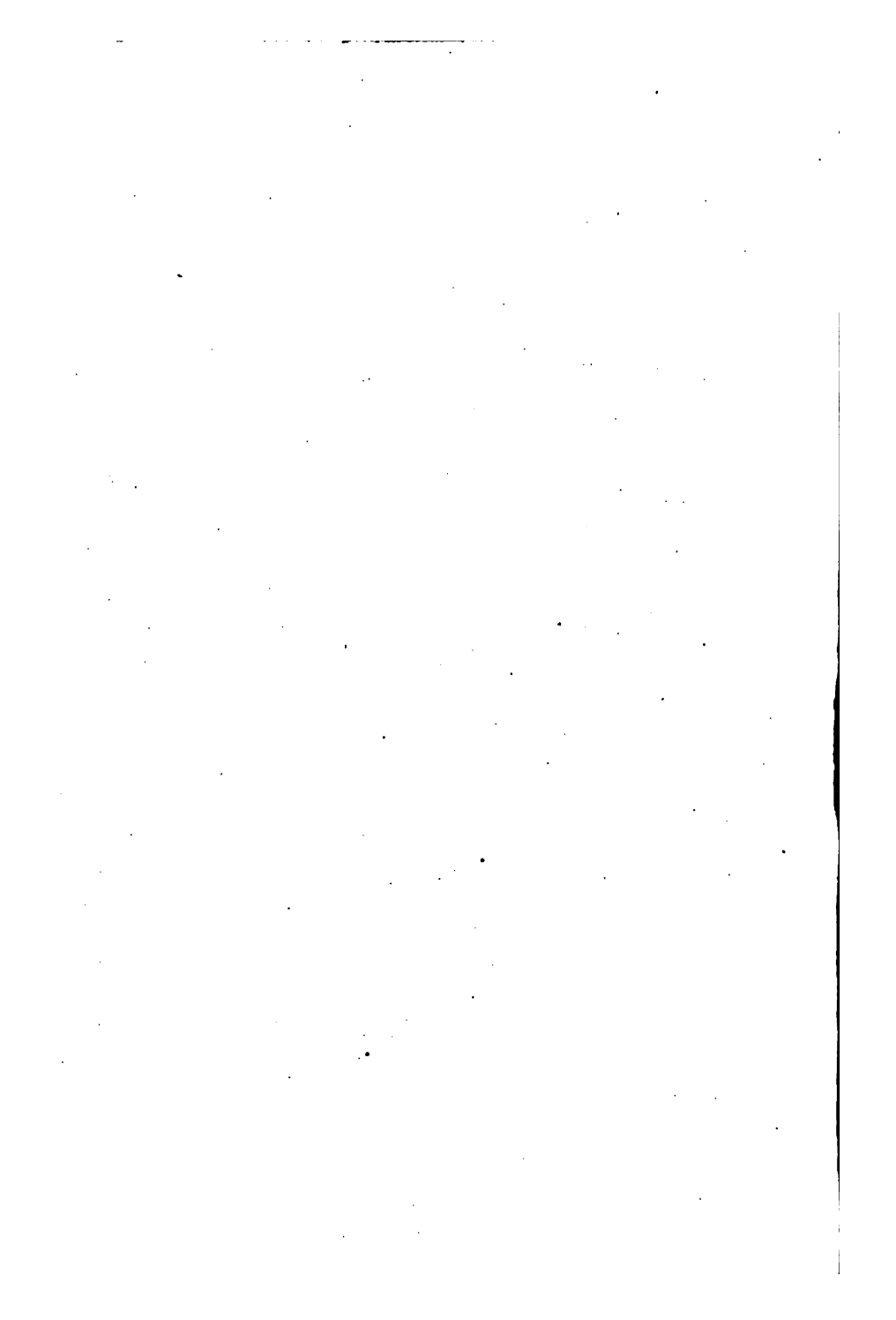
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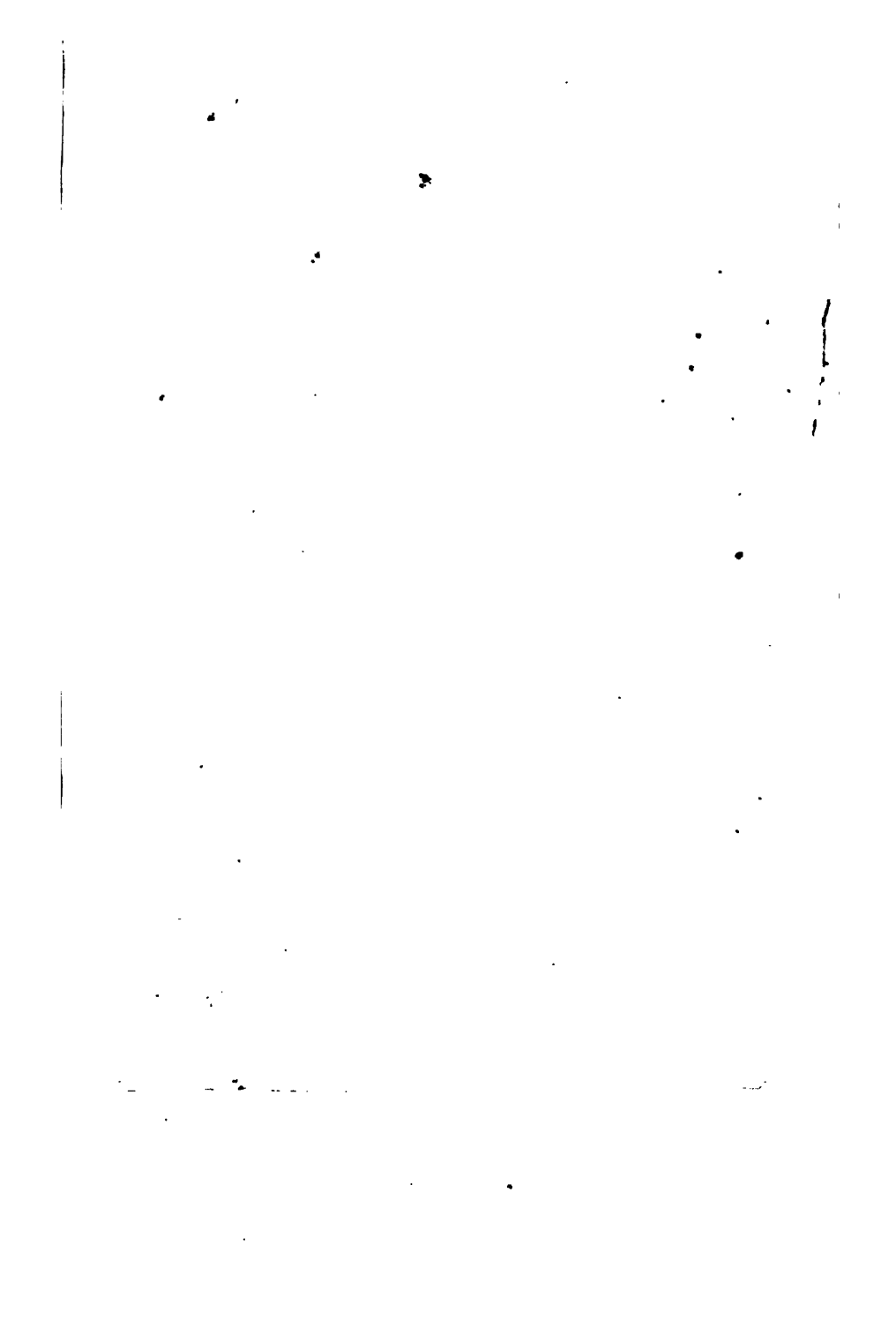
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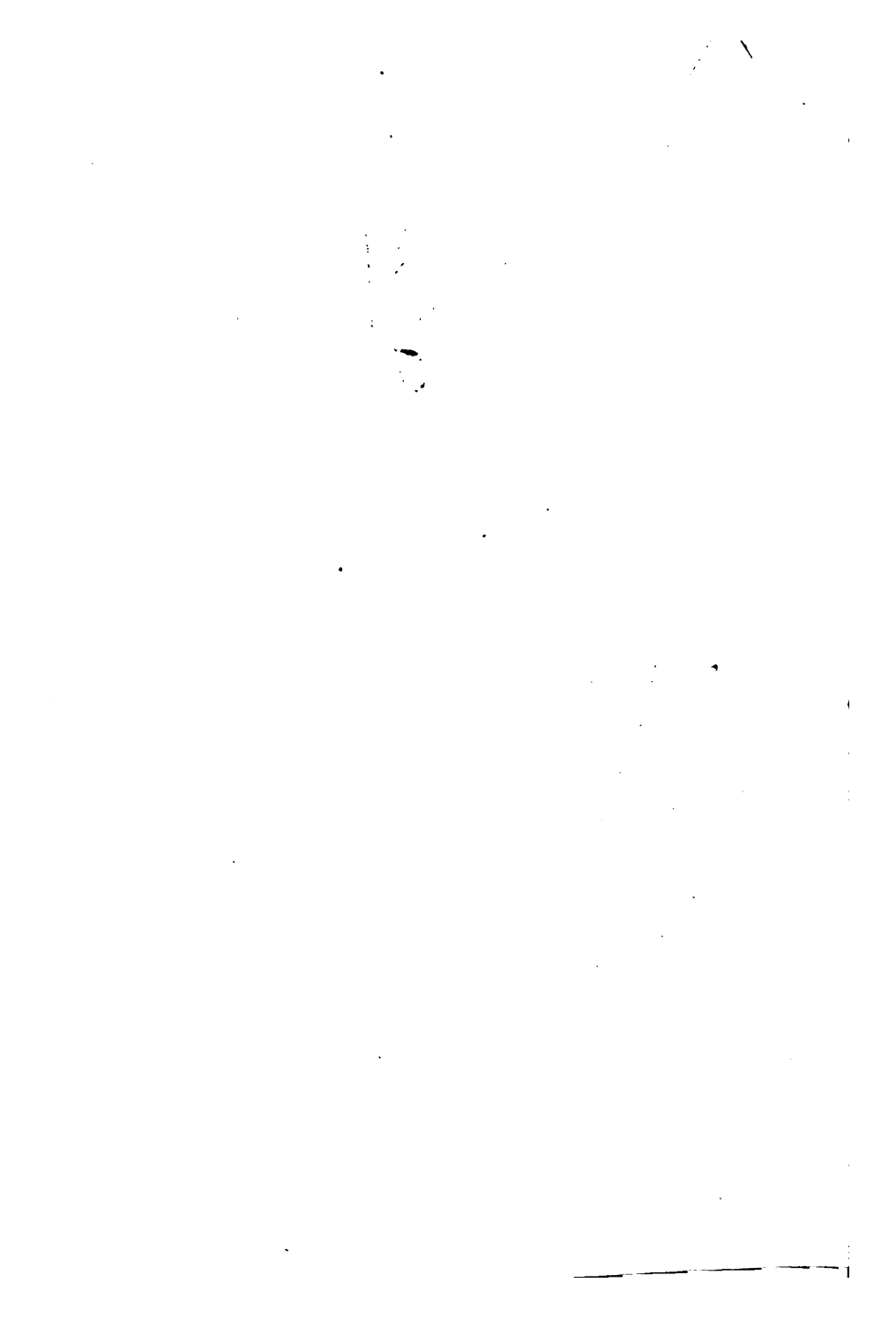












QUICKSANDS

A Tale.

BY ANNA LISLE,

AUTHOR OF "SELF AND SELF-SACRIFICE," ETC.,



New Edition,

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

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TO
ALL WHO ARE EMBARKING
UPON
THE SEA OF LIFE,
IGNORANT OR CARELESS OF
THE QUICKSANDS
THAT LIE BENEATH ITS SPARKLING WATERS,
THIS BOOK
IS
INSCRIBED.

QUICKSANDS.

I

EARLY TRAINING.

"Now, Betsy-Jane, go and mind the shop, while I and Matilda-Anne cook the dinner. Matilda-Anne, you peel these potatoes;—I'll help you in a minute, when I've made the beds and swept the floor."

Such were the commands addressed by Miss Helen Grey—aged six—to two inanimate compounds of wax, calico, and bran—y'clept dolls. Matilda-Anne, who luxuriated in the possession of joints, and consequently experienced great difficulty in maintaining an erect posture, was forthwith ensconced in an arm-chair, and became absorbed in the contemplation of some large beads, which, for the nonce did duty as potatoes; while Betsy-Jane, the jointless doll, possessed of a rigidity of spine that rendered sitting down a matter of sheer impossibility, took her stand against the window-seat, which was supposed to be the shop counter.

"What have we got for dinner, mother?" asked Matilda-Anne, in an exceedingly faint treble, with a strong nasal intonation.

"Roast leg of mutton, and baked potatoes, and Jam bolster," was the response.

"Shop, mother!" squeaked Matilda-Anne, from the window-seat.

"Coming!" shouted the proprietress of the establishment.
"Now Betsy-Jane, you just——"

But the colloquy was destined to go no further; for it was unpleasantly cut short by a third person.

"Helen!" interrupted Mrs. Grey, in an awful voice, "Helen!—where have you learnt to talk in this shocking manner?"

Helen was too much astonished to reply; she could only stare in silence at her mother.

Mrs. Grey continued in the same dread voice. "Do you not know that it is very naughty, and vulgar, and disgraceful—yes, *disgraceful*"—and she paused, to give due effect to her last word—"to talk in that strange way?"

"But I always talk like that to my dolls! I'm pretending to be a woman keeping a shop; and Betsy-Jane and Matilda-Anne are my two little girls, and——"

"There, do not tell me anything more about it!—it positively makes me shudder, to hear you!"

"Is it so very naughty, mamma?"

"Of course it is!—*very* naughty! and if I hear any more of it, I shall be seriously displeased, and shall—whip you!"

The offender did not, however, feel much intimidated by this threat; for she knew that her mother would as soon think of undertaking an excursion to the moon, as of bestowing corporeal punishment on her.

"But mamma, must I *never* keep shop again, with Betsy-Jane and Matilda-Anne?"

"Of course not!—and you must never again call your dolls by those vulgar names! Why not call them Julia and Amelia?—far prettier names, I am sure.—And why not play at some other game?—there are so many pretty games for a little girl to play at with her dolls! For instance, you could pretend to be a duchess, and you could take Lady Julia and Lady Amelia to a ball—or to Court. Would not that be far more amusing?"

"Oh, no mamma! besides, Betsy-Jane and Matilda-Anne—"

"Helen, if you mention those fearful names again, you will drive me mad!"

"Well, I was going to say, mamma, that they wouldn't know how to behave as ladies!—they are only poor girls! And I'm sure I can never learn to call them by any other names!"

What followed, Helen never forgot. Mrs. Grey walked calmly to the window-seat, possessed herself of the person of the jointless Betsy-Jane, and of the paralytic Matilda-Anne, advanced towards the fire, stirred it into a blaze, and threw on to it the unfortunate objects of discussion.

With a cry of horror, Helen was springing forward to the rescue, when her mother, with a firm hand, held her back; and in an agony of grief, she beheld the gradual annihilation of the luckless Betsy-Jane and Matilda-Anne.

That was Helen's first great trouble. Vainly did her mother try to coax her into forgetfulness of the horrid tragedy; for a long while she howled dismally. At last, however, the violence of her grief began to abate; and she sat quietly in her mother's lap before the fire, gazing sadly into the red coals, and fancying that the bright sparks which flew so merrily up the chimney, from the great log thrown across the blaze, were the ashes of the dear departed. Now and then, a gasping sob broke from her, and all her grief was renewed.

It was growing dusk. Marty brought in candles, and drew the curtains; then the tea-tray made its appearance.

"What 'ave you been a'doin' to the poor thing?" asked Marty of Mrs. Grey, as Helen, overwhelmed by an affecting reminiscence, uttered a prolonged howl. "What is it, my lamb?"

"Oh, Marty! my dolls! my dolls!—They are dead! burnt! Marty, burnt!"

"What? how could you go to do that?"

"I didn't, Marty: it was mamma!"

"And what for, Mum, I should like to know?" asked Marty, of her mistress.

"They were very vulgar dolls, Marty; and Miss Helen was calling them by very improper names, and professed her inability—so strong were the associations connected with them—to learn to designate them by more suitable titles. Now, old associations are very strong, as, alas, I have often had occasion to remind *you*, Marty;—indeed, in *your* case they appear to me to be quite ineradicable! But, at all events, I felt that Miss Helen's future welfare depended, in a great measure, on the destruction of the associations and illusions connected with those vulgar dolls; I therefore destroyed them, and shall replace them by others."

Had Mrs. Grey delivered an oration in Arabic, it would have been quite as intelligible to her hearer as was the present address. Marty stood immoveable, regarding her mistress with a fixed stare, and evidently trying, though ineffectually, to grasp her meaning. As she turned away, a sound resembling the irreverent word, "bother," was heard distinctly to emanate from her lips. Just then, the little garden gate swung on its hinges, and a footstep crunched along the gravel path.

"There's Master!" cried Marty, running to open the door.

Mr. Grey entered, rubbing his hands.

"A raw, uncomfortable evening, my dear," he said, addressing his wife. "I've had such a walk!—all the way to Barton! Eh?—what?—why, what's the matter with my little Toddle?" he exclaimed, forgetting his wet clothes (it was raining) and cold hands.

Mrs. Grey related to him the incident that had just occurred. He sighed, pressed his hand to his chest, and coughed. Presently he looked cheerfully at the tea-table.

"There's nothing more comfortable than tea, after such a day as I have had. A snug room, a bright fire, the kettle singing itself into a fever, and the pleasant tea-table! How much there is to make us happy in this world—this pleasant world!"

And he looked round with his genial smile. Poor man! always grateful for the little blessings that fell in his way—always looking to the bright side of things! A country surgeon, with a small practice, and that, too, chiefly amongst the poor and needy, who would have thought that the world was so sunny a place to him?

Marty appeared. "Master, your coat's a' waitin' for you in the kitchen; and your shoes and stockings is a' warmin' for you before the fire. Ain't you ashamed of yourself, to stop there in your wet things?"

"Thank, you, Marty, thank you." And he followed her into the kitchen.

"She's a good soul, that Marty," he exclaimed on his return; "a dear, good soul! Among all the blessings that surround us, I don't know a greater than Marty! How providential that we happened to meet with her!"

"She is honest, certainly—and truthful, and active, and sober, and clever, and clean, and obliging, and faithful; but when you have said that, you have said all," put in Mrs. Grey.

"Why, what more *could* you say?" asked her husband, with a good-natured smile.

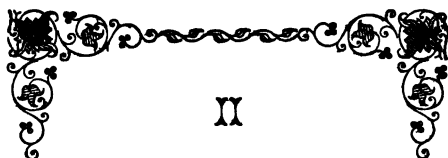
"Well," she replied, "Marty's appearance is very much against her. Then, her pronunciation—her diction—are a perpetual annoyance. Marty is so terribly unrefined!"

Mr. Grey laughed gently.

"Mere drops in the ocean, my dear. Marty suits us far better than a more refined person would do. Doesn't she bake, wash, scrub, clean, cook, contrive—all for eight pounds a year! What *could* you expect more, for eight pounds a year, my love?"

"True—very true," sighed his companion; "but I do wish she would try to infuse a little more polish into her address—especially when visitors call. Often and often have I begged her—almost with the tears in my eyes—to pull down her sleeves when she has to answer a double knock;—but no, she always forgets it! I am now putting her through a course of grammar; but I almost despair of success—she is so very stupid! I do wish we could have a page! Johnnie Taylor might be made to appear very creditable in a suit of your old clothes, altered to fit him. You have no idea how much may be done, with buttons; and they are so cheap!"

"Well, well, dear, I'll think about it; but now, for tea!"

**MARTY.**

MARTY, the subject of the foregoing conversation, was the daughter of a labourer in the village; and when the Greys had first come to Brockley they had engaged her as general servant. She was, at the time when this story opens, a tall, bony woman, of about twenty-five, with as pleasant a face as I have ever seen;—always pleasant to one, her darling, the light of her eyes—little Helen. Marty's eyes were grey—large grey eyes;—and how kind they could look!—and couldn't they flash and gleam when she was angry! Mrs. Grey was for ever begging Marty to take more care of her complexion, and to try to subdue her colour, which was very high; but Helen thought Marty's cheeks beautiful—just like ripe red apples. She had a very large, wide mouth, with *such* a row of brilliant white teeth! And she had brown hair, always dragged back under her cap;—which cap, by the way, was none of your fly-away affairs, stuck on the back of the head, but a sober, respectable edifice, with a gigantic frill, and boasting one ribbon across, to tie it under the chin. Mrs. Grey did not like Marty's voice, which she pronounced coarse and loud; and certainly, when anything happened to excite poor Marty's risible faculties, and provoked the stentorian, "Haw! haw!" inevitable on such occasions, her voice was *not* silvery. Despite the one ribbon, Marty's cap was always awry; she said it was the fault of the person who made it; but, as the same peculiarity had been observable in all her caps, from time immemorial, I think she must have

been mistaken. Marty's limbs had the appearance of not being pairs—she seemed to have two left arms and two left legs; and even her warmest admirers were forced to admit that her gait was not sylph-like.

Such was Marty—dear, good Marty!—one of the best and truest friends Helen Grey ever had.

Her mistress was so unlike her in every respect, that it was no wonder they were constantly at variance, and that she regularly, every month, closed a somewhat warm discussion on the refinements of existence, by saying, "Marty, you leave, this day month!" to which the other invariably replied, "very well, Mum,"—taking no further notice of the announcement.

Mrs. Grey was little, and fair, and spoke and moved in a very gentle, quiet way. She spared no pains to render her little daughter as refined as herself; but Helen feared that she must be a child of very low tastes, and was conscious of causing her mother a great deal of trouble and anxiety; since she was constantly sinning, in one way or another, against her refined mamma's code of good breeding.

But I will digress no further; my story will, in its progress, unfold their characters far better than I could now do.

A few days after the incident above recorded, Mrs. Grey placed in Helen's lap two beautiful new dolls. The child screamed with delight; for one of them—a blonde—was dressed in a grand blue muslin dress and cloak, ornamented with blue ribbons; the other, with dark eyes and hair, wore a pink dress, and had pink decorations in her hat. They were both very beautiful; and, with a very, very faint sigh of regret for the departed Betsy-Jane and Matilda-Anne, she received them in her arms.

"Now Helen," her mother began, "I hope you understand *why* I destroyed your other dolls?"

"Yes, mamma."

"Why?"

"Because they were vulgar."

"Just so. I think you know that I did it, not from anger, but, from a sense of duty?"

"Ye—es—" (rather doubtfully).

"I thought, Helen, that the sight of those dolls would make

you feel vulgar, and that you would grow up to be ugly and awkward—like Marty, for instance. No one loves vulgar people!"

"Doesn't any one love Marty?"

"Her own family do, of course, because they are vulgar too; but ladies and gentlemen would not love Marty. Do you ever see me kiss Marty?"

"No mamma; that *would* be funny!"

"Not 'funny,' dearest; 'strange'—'eccentric'—'droll'—would be a more appropriate expression."

"But I love Marty, mamma."

"Yes dear—because you are only a baby. By and bye—when you are older and wiser—you will learn to see Marty's vulgarities; and they will shock you. Then, though you will be as affable and condescending in your manner towards her, as all ladies are to their inferiors, you will no longer *love* her."

Helen sat staring at her dolls, wondering at all that her mamma said, and believing all that emanated from that (to her) emporium of wisdom. Only, as to the last statement she had her doubts.

"And now, Helen, let us think of two pretty names for your new dolls. What do you think of 'Julia,' for the one in the blue dress?"

"Yes, she shall be Julia," replied Helen, with enthusiasm.

"And 'Amelia' for the other, eh?"

"Yes mamma."

"And now, love, I will teach you how to play at going to Court, and I will be the Queen."

And they did play at "going to Court;" after which, Mrs. Grey sat down to the piano, and executed some waltzes and quadrilles, while Helen danced with Julia and Amelia at an imaginary ball. When she was tired she sat down on the hearth-rug with the court ladies.

That night, when the good Marty put the child to bed, she read to her the story of little Samuel, before hearing her say her prayers. Helen thought it very pretty. Marty always read to her some such story the last thing at night, and then added some comments of her own.

"Wasn't she a good woman—that Hannah—to give her

only child to the Lord, and teach him to be good, and to think more of serving God than of anything else?"

"Yes Marty;—and did she teach him to hate vulgar people?"

"No, my precious—that would have been wicked! She taught him to love God; and if he loved God, he'd be very sure not to hate anybody!—But you're sleepy now; so say your prayers. One more kiss, my blessed darling. Good night."

"Marty! Marty, dear!" cried the little girl, as the servant was leaving her.

"What is it, my pet?"

"I'll always love you Marty—always!"

"Bless her! she's her father's own child!—good night, my lamb."



JOHN.

"Yes, you may play with Lucy Howard. She is not a vulgar child," said Mrs. Grey.

Helen had met Lucy Howard at a dancing-school in the neighbouring town; and, as Lucy lived not far from the Greys, and as the two children were of the same age, a close friendship was immediately struck up between them. Mrs. Grey approved of the intimacy, especially as the Howards kept a pony-carriage, and were "genteel people." Mrs. Grey was so anxious that her dear child should form desirable connexions!—For herself, she would not, she said, have cared; but to Helen she owed a duty, which she was determined to discharge, at any sacrifice to her own feelings.—She was so unselfish, was Mrs. Grey!

Lucy Howard had a brother, ten years older than herself—quite grown-up, in fact. His mother—one of the best and dearest women I have ever met—was a widow. Mrs. Howard was warm-hearted—sensible—religious. Helen thought that she had but one fault;—she never seemed thoroughly to understand and appreciate her dear mamma, nor all the sacrifices her anxiety on her child's account entailed on her. But for that fault, Helen would have adored Mrs. Howard. She never could understand how it happened that two such good persons as her mamma and that dear kind lady could not agree; but so it was. Marty and Mrs. Howard were, however, great allies; and the latter, strange to say, did not seem to notice Marty's vulgarities;—but then, she was a person of stronger nerves than poor Mrs. Grey,

who was of so highly wrought a nervous temperament, that the least thing would shake her fortitude! She could not bear to go near a sick person, nor to do anything that required the least personal exertion. Once, when Helen had the scarlet fever, her mamma absolutely shut herself up in her own room; and Marty had to nurse her through it—so acute were poor Mrs. Grey's feelings! (Poor Marty had *no* nerves!) And once, there was an alarm of fire in the night; and Mrs. Grey rushed out of the house, forgetting everything in her nervous excitement; and Marty—just like her—ran through the smoke and flames, and dragged Helen out of bed, and saved her from being burnt to death. This happened in the cottage they lived in when they first came to Brockley.

After her mamma had given her permission to play with Lucy, she spent much of her time with the Howards. They lived in a nice, old-fashioned house, which had once been a farm, and had been built out, and somewhat modernised to suit the requirements of its present inhabitants.

The sitting-room looked upon a delicious lawn, whose rich velvet carpeting surpassed any other, in Helen's estimation. This lawn was bordered by a row of noble elms, under one of which—the largest—was a rustic seat, on which Lucy and Helen used to spread their books and toys. That was when Lucy's brother John was away; for when he was at home, he was fond of sitting there with his books. He was very quiet and thoughtful—was John, and was almost always reading—studying for College, his mother said. Mrs. Howard was very proud of her son, as well she might be; for he was not only clever and studious, but very gentle and submissive to her authority, and so kind-hearted, that he could not bear to see even the meanest insect suffer pain. He was, as I have said, ten years older than Lucy and Helen.

Long did Helen remember a little incident that occurred soon after she first met him.

She was looking over the pictures in one of her story books, which rested on the seat under the elm, when suddenly, flounce dropped something on to the page—a cockchafer! In an extremity of disgust, yet hardly knowing what she did, she shook the poor insect to the ground, and trampled it to death.

"Why did you do that?" asked John, who had advanced unheard, over the mossy lawn.

"Oh! the nasty thing!" ejaculated the little girl.

"What is there nasty in it?" he demanded.

"It's nasty all over! and it has nasty, crawly, scratchy legs!—And oh! that dreadful thing at the end of his tail!—it's his sting!"

"I am afraid that you are either a very ignorant, or a very cruel, little girl!" he replied.

She looked up quickly, and turned scarlet. He continued:—

"What harm was that poor little thing doing to you, or to anyone? What had it done so terrible as to deserve to be killed?"

No answer.

"Come Helen—don't be obstinate."

"I'm not obstinate," she replied, in a trembling voice.

"Then answer me.—Did that poor little thing deserve to be killed?"

"No; I killed him all of a sudden—in a hurry—because he was ugly, and I didn't want him to come near me."

"Are you sorry you killed him?"

"I don't know."

"Helen, that poor insect was one of the most helpless things in the world. It lives on leaves, never kills or hurts anything. All it cares for is, to be allowed to fly about in the fresh air, and to enjoy its life unmolested. And that life, though so short, was so happy—so very happy! I dare say that little insect had as much pleasure in one day, as you have in a year—all pleasure, Helen, as long as he lives. You don't know what great happiness it was to him, to whirl about in the air—something like what dancing is to you, only much nicer. And when he found a very tender green leaf, it was more pleasure to him than it would be to you to be allowed to eat up all the nicest tarts and sweets in Mrs. Thomas's shop!—For God, who has denied poor insects another life, has made this one so pleasant to them, that it must be only the most cruel, or the most ignorant, persons, who can wantonly deprive them of it. Poor little innocent thing! he little thought, when his heart was beating so fast

with happiness, just now, that it would soon be stopped ; and that the only life he might ever know, was so soon to be taken from him ! ”

Helen burst into tears.

“ That’s right Helen ! I knew you did it without thinking.”

“ Oh ! I wish I hadn’t ! I wish I hadn’t ! The poor little thing ! ”

John raised his hand to the tree, and gently took from it another cockchafer.

“ See, Helen ! there were two of them ! Perhaps they were fond of each other, and this one will be unhappy.”

A fresh burst of tears.

“ Now, just look at this one ; and I’m sure you won’t think it ugly. Look at his beautiful, large, black eyes, set so nicely in his pretty little head ; and at his soft feelers, with their little velvet tufts ! ”

“ But his *sting* !—” she interrupted, with a slight remnant of terror.

“ You silly child !—that’s not a sting ! Look here—does it sting *me* ? Let me touch your finger with it. There—now are you satisfied ? Why shouldn’t the poor thing have a tail, as well as a dog, or a cat—Eh ? ”

“ But his scratchy claws ! ”

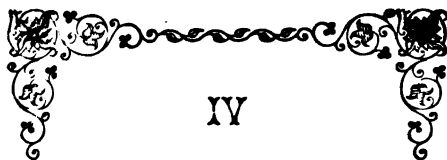
“ Oh ! they don’t scratch unless you try to shake him off, and then he clings to you to save himself from falling. Wouldn’t *you* cling, if a great giant held you a mile up in the air, and were going to drop you ? Of course you would ! Now, I think his little arms, and legs, and head, very pretty ! See how nicely he walks about on my hands ! Ah ! he’s spreading his wings—there he goes ! I wish you had seen his wings—they are so beautiful—quite transparent ;—and that hard brown back of his is the case he keeps them in, to prevent their getting broken or wet among the branches or on the ground. Now, don’t you think him a nice little fellow after all ? ”

“ Yes ; but I hope he won’t be unhappy about his brother. Do you think he will ? ”

“ I hope not.—Now, do you think you will ever again be cruel to a poor insect ? ”

“ No ; I’m sure I shan’t ! ”

“ That’s a good little girl ! Now, I want to read ; you run away, and play with Lucy.”



JOHNNIE TAYLOR.

"DEAR me! Dear me!" ejaculated Mrs. Grey.

"What's the matter, my dear?" asked her husband.

"Matter, Mr. Grey?—Mrs. Howard is going to call here, and you have not yet decided about Johnnie Taylor! Marty's uncouth ways will be sure to spoil all?"

"Spoil what, love?" asked Mr. Grey.

"Mrs. Howard's first impression of us.—First impressions are of such very, very great importance!"

"Not in the way you mean, love."

"In what other way, may I ask?"

"You think, my dear Maria, that Mrs. Howard's opinion of us will be formed from what she observes of our style of living. Now from all I have heard of her, I think she is about the last person to allow herself to be so influenced."

"I don't know that, Mr. Grey; we are all apt to be more influenced by externals than we are willing to confess."

"Not *all*, dear. But I was going to observe, that Mrs. Howard knows we are poor, and——"

"Why should she know it, Mr. Grey?"

"My dear Maria, is not everyone's business known in a little place like this? Isn't the leg of mutton, that comes on Saturday for our Sunday's dinner, known to last us—cold, and done up in various ways—till Thursday? Are not the small parcels of grocery, etc., which arrive periodically from the village, duly chronicled in the annals of Brockley? Does not all besides tell the same tale?"

"Not at all, Mr. Grey! We are a small family, and require small quantities! However, we might easily avoid all this unnecessary tittle-tattle, by sending to town for what we want."

"To Hapsley?—seven miles off! Why, who could go?"

"You could, Mr. Grey!"

He sighed, and meekly inclined his head.

"Or Marty could go," she resumed, "if we had anyone to answer the door while she was away."

"But we are wandering from the question, my dear," continued her patient auditor. "What I mean is this.—Mrs. Howard knows our circumstances. She is a sensible woman, and will respect us for acting in conformity with those circumstances. Any other style of living would be inexpedient and vulgar. If Mrs. Howard does not see things in this light, we are better without her acquaintance."

"You never did see things as I do!" sighed Mrs. Grey. "If you only knew how anxious I feel about this poor dear child!—how desirable I know it is, that she should form eligible acquaintances early in life! I was never strong; and if anything should happen to me——"

"My dear Maria!—don't talk in that way!—it grieves me! There—There—" (kissing her.) "I'll think about Johnnie Taylor!"

"Dear William!—just like you!—so good, and generous, and open to conviction!—You know it isn't for *myself*!—a crust of bread, and a tent to cover me, would meet my wants, with *you* by my side!"

"Dear wife, I know it! And when I remember, that when you married me I had the prospect of great wealth, and that nothing but my uncle's marrying again, when no one expected it, prevented our being rich people——"

"Don't talk of that, William; you know that such considerations are of no weight with me!—And, dearest, since you think that I am unreasonable—no, I don't mean that—since you think it inadvisable to keep a page, I will cheerfully submit to your verdict."

How pretty the little woman looked, as she kissed her husband, and smiled in his face!

Next day there was a great shuffling of feet on the mat in

the passage; and Marty entered the room to say, "That there Johnnie Taylor's a 'botherin' to speak to you, Mum."

"Show him in, Marty," replied her mistress, with her blandest smile.

"Please'm," began Johnnie, a sharp-looking, black-eyed youth of twelve, "please'm, Mr. Grey told me to come here about your place."

"When did he tell you, Johnnie?"

"Just now'm, as he passed by."

"Oh! very well.—Ahem.—You are a well-spoken youth, Johnnie—very well-spoken, indeed! Now, what can you do?"

"Black shoes'm, and clean knives'm, and sweep'm, scrub'm and run errants—" ("Ahem," from Mrs. Grey, *par parenthèse*, as the last word fell upon her ear)—"and—and anythink!"

"Anything Johnnie—not anythink—g, not k!"

"Yes'm," returned the imperturbable Johnnie.

"Can you read?"

"Yes'm."

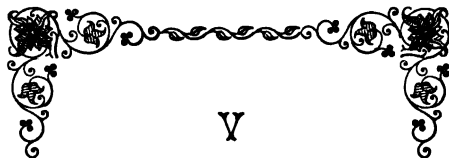
"And write?"

"Yes'm."

"Ah! I see you are a person of refined tastes. Are you quick at learning?"

"Yes'm."

After some further conversation, the bargain was concluded; and Johnnie was to come on the following Tuesday. Mrs. Grey was happy, and greeted her husband, on his return, with a smile that seemed very pleasant to him; for he fondly smoothed down her soft hair, and called her "his own pet," as if she were a little child, instead of a woman of thirty-five.



LINDLEY MURRAY AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

"WELL Marty, now that James is come, you will have more time to bestow on your education," said Mrs. Grey, a few days after. (Mrs. Grey had decided on calling the page "James;" she said that it sounded better than "Johnnie.") Marty had of course abbreviated the cognomen to "Jim.")

"Law! that there Jim won't be much of a help to me! He's for ever a 'combin' of his hair and lookin' in the glass!—Not that he needn't, neither;—he aint so very an'some!"

"Marty! Marty!" exclaimed her mistress, "are you aware how many rules of grammar you have broken within the last minute? Will you never remember that admirable remark of Lindley Murray's:—'Purity of style consists in the use of such words, and such constructions, as belong to the idiom of the language which we speak; in opposition to words and phrases that are ungrammatical, obsolete, new-coined, or used without proper authority. All such words as——'"

"Hadn't I better put up the muslin curtains, Mum? They look so bad a 'lyin' on the floor!" interrupted Marty, who had all this while been standing with a dish in her hand, containing a beefsteak, brought in for her mistress's inspection.

"What I am saying is of far more importance than the muslin curtains. Let them wait."

Marty shifted from her right to her left leg, and tried to look resigned.

"Now Marty, listen to what Lindley Murray says about the strength of a sentence. 'The *first* rule for promoting the strength of a sentence, is, to prune it of all redundant words and members. It is a general maxim, that any words which do not add some importance to the meaning of a sentence, always injure it.' Now, Marty, you said, 'that there Jim.' What possible importance could the word 'there,' add to your sentence? Can you tell me?"

"No, Mum," said Marty, shifting back to the right foot, and changing the steak to her other arm.

"Then, as to the continuation of your speech; I really almost despair of making you comprehend the fearful solecisms into which you have fallen. What do you mean by the word, 'a-combin'?—and why do you add to it the preposition 'of'? It is a redundancy—a gross superfluity of speech! There is no such verb as the verb 'To a-comb-of.' Now, *is* there?"

"No, Mum."

"And why *will* you persist in refusing to sound the participial *ing*? How can you obstinately persevere in pronouncing words that end with a *g*, as though their termination were an *n*?—Oh! why, Marty?—why?"

"I dont know, Mum."

"Does not Lindley Murray say, 'The participial *ing* must always have its ringing sound; as, writing, reading, speaking'? But the *greatest* fault in the whole sentence, was the expression, 'Not that he needn't.'—Now Marty, have I not told you repeatedly, that 'two negatives in English, destroy one another, or are equivalent to an affirmative; as'—what is the example Marty? Come!—you must remember it! Rule 16."

"'The bird *as* sung so beautiful *is* flew;'" promptly replied Marty, with happy assurance.

"Oh! dear, dear, dear, no! That shocking misquotation is an example belonging to relative pronouns!" exclaimed Mrs. Grey, who from long practice, had the whole of Lindley Murray at her finger-ends. "Now, try again Marty;—I think you look as if you would be right this time," she added, encouragingly.

"'Thin in the tree as pro—'" began Marty; when the door was suddenly thrown open, and the page announced,—

"Mrs. 'Oward'm!"

Mrs. Howard!

And there was Marty, immoveably fixed on one leg, holding the dish containing the vulgar raw steak; while the window curtains still littered the floor! This was the advent which had been the theme of so much discussion—of so many plans and devices;—this!

Mrs. Grey looked as fiercely as *she* ever could look, at Marty, who, forgetting the inexpediency of her presence, retained her position in the middle of the room, and contemplated Mrs. Howard with a gaze of absorbing curiosity. Her mistress was in despair. At last she spoke.

"Marty, are you beside yourself? Leave the room!"

Thus recalled to the realities of life, Marty started violently, wheeled about, and beat a retreat; and, soon after, a well-known "Haw! haw!" was faintly heard from the kitchen regions.

"You will excuse that person, I trust?" said the lady to her visitor. "She is a poor, half-witted creature, whom I keep out of charity—merely out of charity! But I really think I shall have to send her away—she is so very strange!"

"She has a good, honest face—one that I would trust," responded the new-comer.

"Yes, she is a good creature, in her way."

"I don't know why we have not been sooner acquainted," Mrs. Howard continued. "I believe I have been here the longest, and suppose it was for me to make the first call; but I have been so much occupied with my son, that time has passed away more quickly than I thought, and our children are old friends before *we* have even met."

"I am sure, my dear Mrs. Howard," replied Mrs. Grey, "nothing has for a long while given me so much pleasure as your visit; and I am sure Mr. Grey will be as much charmed as I am. I don't mind confessing it to *you*; but, to tell the truth, Mr. Grey and I are a *little* exclusive—people say, *proud*, but I hope they do not really think so! And how is your dear, lovely little rosebud?—a sweet child!"

(Mrs. Grey was all this time wondering whether Mrs. Howard had come in the pony-carriage; and, if so, whether any of the neighbours—especially those Thomsons—would pass the door while it was there waiting.)

"My little girl is quite well, thank you," said Mrs. Howard in reply; "but I cannot agree with your flattering opinion of her. She is not pretty."

Mrs. Howard's face wore, sometimes, a cold look, which Helen did not like. It had that look just then.

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Grey, "I am surprised at your not thinking her good-looking! Certainly, her features are not regularly beautiful——"

"No, I should think not," laughingly interrupted Mrs. Howard, when she has a *nez retroussé*, and a very wide mouth! —But I beg your pardon——"

"I was about to observe," Mrs. Grey resumed, "that she has so very amiable an expression!"

"Oh, yes! she is good temper itself!—A good, tractable child. She gives me no trouble."

Mrs. Grey had looked rather uncomfortable for the last minute or so. You see, she was such a sensitive creature, that Mrs. Howard's plain way of speaking seemed almost to put her out; and she was so anxious to please—(dear, amiable woman!) and not to give pain by dissenting from anyone's views, that she could often be brought to give up her own opinion directly, (especially when she had anything to gain by so doing.)

"Your son," she said, changing the subject, "is much older, is he not?"

"Yes, he is sixteen—ten years older than Lucy. He is now at Eton."

"A very fine youth—quite a *noble* youth!" hazarded the other.

"He is tall for his age, and stout enough to relieve me from any anxiety lest his studies interfere with his health."

"Ah!" sighed Mrs. Grey; "who, but a mother, can appreciate all the harassing cares of maternity!—the ever-weariness, restless anxiety, for the well-being of our dear ones!"

"Nay," remonstrated her visitor; "they were never intended to be subjects of such anxiety. If we do our best to give them, in their early years, such moral culture as we think needful, we should be content to leave the rest to a Higher Power; for, 'though the lot is cast into the lap, the whole disposing of it is of the Lord.'"

Mrs. Grey fidgetted, and looked nervous, as she always did when any scriptural quotation was uttered in her presence.

"True; but I alluded more especially to their settlement in life—their prospects for the future."

"That also, we must leave to Him without whom 'not even a sparrow falleth to the ground.' Let us 'seek *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all things shall be added.' Give a child good principles—I do not mean good principles in a worldly sense only, but, such as will lead him to fulfil that sublime injunction, to 'keep himself unspotted from the world;' give him these, and if he meet with prosperity they will help him to enjoy it,—if with adversity, to bear it!"

(Helen noticed, just then, what beautiful eyes Mrs. Howard had.)

Mrs. Grey assented, but asked—

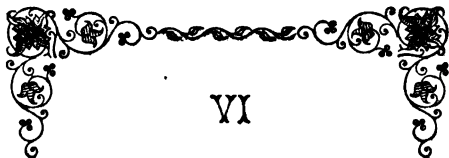
"Yet you do not think it wise, *entirely* to dispense with all care for our children's advancement?"

"Far from it. I only say that it should not be made the *first* consideration.—But I am prolonging my visit to a most unceremonious length." She rose, to leave. "I shall see you soon, I hope?—and your little girl with you?"

When she was gone, Mrs. Grey summoned Marty.

"Marty, you behaved like a savage!—a Hottentot!—a North American Indian, covered with tattoo and war-paint!—a bear!—a hippopotamus!—a seal!—You leave this day month!"

"Very well, Mum," said Marty.



THE PEW IN CHURCH.

"Mr dear William, do you think we could manage to change our sittings to the other aisle?"

"Yes dear, I daresay we could. But why?"

"Because those vulgar Thomsons sit so near us, and lie in wait as we leave the church, in order to walk home with us."

"I don't see that they are vulgar, my dear; nor did you think so when we first came to Brockley, for you were then just as anxious for them to call, as you have since been for Mrs. Howard's visit."

"That is precisely it, Mr. Grey. I *was* anxious to know them, then; and why? Simply because we knew no one else! But everything is progressive. Society is progressive—Ambition is progressive. We are living in a state of progression; and we must progress! Before we came to Brockley we visited Mrs. Perkins, the apothecary's wife, and Mrs. Jones, the dancing master's wife, and the Dobbsses, and the Hobsons, and——"

"Yes, my dear, I remember them all."

"But when we came here, Mr. Grey, we progressed into a new sphere. We cut the Perkinses and all that set——"

"I didn't Maria—and I never will!"

"I did, Mr. Grey; and I always shall!—Well, when we came here, the Thomsons seemed very aristocratic people, compared with those we had formerly known; and we therefore felt flattered by their acquaintance. *Now*, however, as Mrs. Howard has called, we must drop the Thomsons!"

"Why? They are very good, excellent people—and capital patients of mine!"

"*Why*,' Mr. Grey? I wonder you have not more sense! Is it to be believed, that Mrs. Howard will tolerate us, if we have such associates? There is a very good saying, 'Show me your friends, and I'll tell you what you are!' Suppose that test were applied to us, as regards the Thomsons?—a nice opinion Mrs. Howard would form of us!"

"And are you so very anxious for Mrs. Howard's good opinion, as to be willing to give up friends who were kindness itself to us, when, God knows! we sorely needed kindness! Besides, what are *we*, that we should presume to imagine Mrs. Howard would rank us above the Thomsons? And if she were capable of withdrawing her friendship merely because we did not choose to carney to her refined tastes, I should say,—let her do so!—we are better without such friends!"

"Of course you would say so, Mr. Grey!—as you would, if it were in your power, do everything to ruin the prospects of this dear child! It is not for myself, I am sure—no one could call *me* selfish! Come here, my darling! you have no one but your mother to love you;—and when she is gone——"

She buried her face in Helen's curls.

"Dear Maria—You mistake. I did not mean to speak unkindly——"

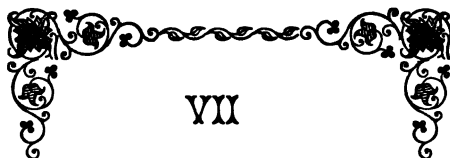
But the lady was for some time inconsolable.

"Now I think of it," he resumed, "there is a pew to let in the other aisle. It is very near the door, and I'm afraid there would be a draught for you Maria; but——"

"Oh no! do not, pray, change the pew on account of what I said, dear William. I daresay I was in the wrong. Try to forget that I have been so foolish, dearest!"

And two small white hands were raised caressingly to his shoulder. The next Sunday they sat in the other pew; and though there was a draught, and Mr. Grey coughed a good deal, they avoided the Thomsons; and when Mrs. Howard's pony carriage drove past on its way home, there was nothing to mar the "gentility" of their appearance.

Poor Mrs. Grey! What a sad thing it is, to be so sensitive and refined!



LAZARUS AND DIVES.

"AND when I'm a grown-up lady," said Helen, very pompously, "I'll drive you in my carriage, Lucy. And I shall have *four* horses, and their harness shall be all covered with gold and precious stones! And I'll live in a grand house, and have a man-servant to open the door!"

"And Marty, too?—You'll have poor Marty?"

"Oh! yes, of course! But Marty would look too vulgar to open the door!"

Lucy remained silent for a few minutes, as if pondering her friend's words. Helen continued:—

"And what will *you* do, Lucy, when you are a grown-up lady?"

"I shall live here, with mamma and John."

"Yes; but suppose you get very rich?"

"Well, then I'll buy Mrs. Jones a new donkey-cart, and have a stable built for her donkey; and I'll ask Mrs. Jones to tea."

"Oh, Lucy! you couldn't do that! She's too vulgar!"

"Mamma says that rich people are often more vulgar than poor ones," remonstrated Lucy.

Helen, in her turn, pondered. Lucy resumed;—

"Mamma says, that it's vulgar to be *afraid* of being vulgar."

"Well done, little Lucy!" exclaimed her brother, who had been listening to the conversation between the two children. "But Helen, don't you know that it is very wicked to despise poor people?"

"But they are so dirty!"

"Dirty?—no indeed—at least, not all of them; and those, not nearly so dirty as they look. Their clothes are old and tumbled, and dingy-looking; but that doesn't make them *dirty*—does it?"

"No."

"I will take you, some day, to one of their cottages, and you shall see how comfortable they manage to make them; though the walls are not papered, and the floors are of brick, without carpet, and the tables are of deal, without a table cloth, and no two chairs are alike."

"Oh, no! I musn't! mamma wouldn't let me!"

"Why not?"

"For fear I should catch some dreadful disease."

John frowned, and was silent for a few moments. Then he continued, addressing his sister:—

"Lucy, have you ever caught any 'dreadful disease' in any of the cottages?"

She laughed. "No indeed!—How funny!"

John continued. "You do well to obey your mother Helen; but perhaps she may change her mind, and allow you to enter one of the cottages. I will ask my mother to speak to you——"

"No thank you," interrupted Helen; "I would rather not. I don't like poor people—except Marty."

John cast a pitying look on the little girl. Soon after, they went in to tea; and the two children were in a short time too much absorbed in the enjoyment of buttered cakes, bread and jam, and sundry delicacies of a similar description, to dwell upon their late conversation. Not so John, who, in an under-tone, related it to his mother. After tea, Mrs. Howard brought out a large picture-book for the children to look at. Turning over the leaves, she began to explain one of the pictures to the children.

"There was a certain rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar laid at his gate full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried. And in Hell, being in torment, he lifted up his

eyes, and beheld Lazarus afar off, seated in Abraham's bosom."

Mrs. Howard paused. Helen rose, and knelt on her chair, to have a better look at the picture.

"Now Helen," Mrs. Howard continued, "I daresay Dives, the rich man, thought the poor beggar very vulgar, and disgusting; and himself, very grand,—Eh?"

"Yes; and I'm sure I should have thought so too."

"But which did *God* like the best?"

"Why," answered Helen, somewhat reluctantly, "the beggar; or He wouldn't have taken him to heaven, instead of Dives."

"And in Heaven, the poor despised beggar became a glorious angel; while the rich man, who had thought himself, and whom others had thought, so much better than Lazarus, went into torment, and became a lost spirit! Does not that show you how wrong it is to despise the poor?—since God often thinks more of a poor man than of a rich one."

There was another pause. Helen was thinking. Mrs. Howard again addressed her.

"Do you ever read your Bible, my dear?"

"Marty reads it to me."

"And does Marty ever read, in any part of the Bible, that God dislikes the poor?"

"No, never."

"Did Jesus Christ go about doing good to the rich, and avoiding the poor?"

"Oh no! He loved the poor."

"And if He who made the world, and all that is in it, loved the poor, have you—a little, sinful child—any right to call them 'vulgar,' and to say you 'don't like' poor people?"

"But all that happened so long ago—poor people are not the same now—of course the poor people in the Bible were clean, and——"

"Lazarus was 'covered with sores!' Yet God was not disgusted with him!"

"But mamma says——"

"You are a little goose! Your mamma would surely never approve of your saying that you 'don't like poor people.' She is so very anxious about you, that she fears you may catch a fever if you enter their cottages."

Helen felt rather uncomfortable. Mrs. Howard's arguments only corroborated Marty's lessons from the Bible; and yet she could not reconcile them with her mamma's notions:—notions, which she was imbibing with all the facility of childhood's yielding nature, aided by her passionate affection for her mother, whom she regarded as the first of human beings.

Soon, however, the elastic buoyancy of childhood effaced the temporary impression; and she raced away to have a game at Tom Tiddler's Ground with Lucy and John. At nine o'clock Marty arrived, to escort her home.

It was only about ten minutes' walk, and Marty was not generally of a nervous temperament; but this evening she was attended by Peter Jones, ("an acquaintance of hers," she called him!) When they had walked a little way, Marty said,—

"Now don'tee talk like that, Peter! I aint' got no call to keep company with no one;—and so I tell'ee!"

"But don't you never mean to walk with no young man, Marty?"

(Oh; Lindley Murray! If Mrs. Grey could but have been present!)

"Law! how the fellow bothers!—P'raps I may!—p'raps I mayn't!"

"Then you'll think over it, maybe, Marty?"

"There—don't bother me no more to-night!" responded Marty, as they arrived at the cottage.

So Marty's swain presented her with a votive offering, in the shape of some apples, tied up in a blue cotton handkerchief tessellated with large white spots; and took his departure.

When Helen was in bed, Marty hung fondly over her, kissing and petting her more than usual. At last she said,—

"You wouldn't have your poor old Marty leave you, and not be here to read the Good Book to you of a night;—would you, my lamb?"

"Oh, no, Marty!" responded the little girl, clinging round her neck, in terror at the thought.

"No, indeed!—what would become of the darling without her Marty?—Leave you? No, that I won't, my precious—never—never!—no, not for all the Peters in the world!"



HAMAN.

"I CAN'T bear that Louisa Thomson!" burst from Helen's lips one day, when she was spending the evening with the Howards, after her return from the dancing-school.

"*Why* can't you?" asked Mrs. Howard, in her usual placid voice.

"Because she's ten years old, and I'm only six; and because she has four silk frocks, and I've only one—(and that's made out of mamma's old one!)"

"My dear Helen, do you know that you have just spoken very wickedly?"

Helen's face and neck turned scarlet, as was always the case when she was reproved; and her eyes filled with tears. Her kind friend gently passed her arm round her.

"Dear child, I hope that you only spoke without thinking. You do not really mean that you dislike Louisa Thomson? Some day *you* will be ten years of age; and if any little girl of six dislike you then because you are older than she, will you not think it very hard? And suppose that any little girl who had not work on her frock, and a broad sash round her waist (as you have) were to dislike you, because you have them, would you not think it very unjust? Ask Marty to read to you to-night the story of Haman. His sin was yours, and he died miserably, in consequence! If you give way to envy, it will grow upon you, my dear, and will cause you to do all manner of wicked things. Don't you know that Cain murdered his brother Abel through envy—because Abel's

sacrifice was accepted, and his was not? Don't you know that the feeling in your heart just now, would, if you gave way to it, make you commit *murder* (just as Cain did), provided you were very much tempted, and had the opportunity?"

Helen looked up in terror. Mrs. Howard continued:—

"And Louisa Thomson is, I think, a very nice little girl—"

"Don't you think her vulgar?" interrupted Helen.

"No, not in the least, my dear.—But I thought we were not going to talk any more about 'vulgar people!'"

Helen looked down. When Marty came to fetch her, Mrs. Howard begged her to read to Helen the history of Haman; which Marty promised she would do.

"Well dear," said Mrs. Grey, drawing the child to her knee, "and what did Mrs. Howard talk about?"

"About Cain and Abel, mamma, and another person—I forget his name, who envied somebody, and died of it."

Mrs. Grey thought it very foolish of Mrs. Howard to talk on such gloomy subjects to a child of six; but she kept her thoughts to herself. Helen continued:—

"And Mrs. Howard told me how naughty it was to be angry with Louisa Thomson for being older than me, and for having four silk dresses, when I have only one, made out of your old one."

"You didn't tell her *that*?" gasped Mrs. Grey.

"Was it naughty, mamma?"

"Yes, *very* naughty."

(Oh! yes, Mrs. Grey!—far naughtier—was it not?—than to indulge the feeling that is akin to murder!)

"Never mind, dear; Mrs. Howard would think nothing of it," was Mr. Grey's mild remark.

"Indeed! Do you think so, Mr. Grey?" exclaimed his partner, with more vehemence than was natural to her. Then checking herself, she added,—“But I have long despaired of making either you or Marty enter into *my* views!"

Mr. Grey sighed, and drew his little daughter close to him.

"And so," he asked, "my little girl was not only *wicked* enough, but *mean* enough, to dislike Louisa Thomson, because her father can afford to dress her better than I have the means of dressing you, Helen?"

The mild, reproachful tones of the gentle voice went to the

heart of the child. She looked up in his face, and gave a little choking sob.

"It was naughty, papa!—I won't do it again!"

After Helen had left them, Mr. Grey spoke very seriously to his wife.

"Maria, you are neglecting that child, most fearfully!"

"*Neglecting?* Is she not my one thought—morning, noon, and night? Have I not purchased for her the most expensive educational books? Do I not think, and contrive, and rack my brains, in order that she may make a respectable appearance at church, and in the dancing academy? Do I spare any pains to render her refined and accomplished?"

"Maria! Maria!—where did you learn these worldly notions? How often must I remind you, that the education—the principles—you are instilling into the child, will, unless some counter-influence preserve her, render her a cold-hearted, selfish woman of the world—as mean as she is selfish!"

"You will never see things as I do!" began Mrs. Grey, making a "tears, ahoy!" demonstration with her handkerchief.

But her husband was for once proof against even her tears. "No," he exclaimed; "I pray to God I never shall!—Why, you found fault with the child for telling about that trumpery frock; yet, overlooked the sin she committed in giving way to envious feelings!"

"Dear me, Mr. Grey! you talk as if the child were a grown-up person, and her character were formed!"

"No Maria;—were it so, I should despair, and be silent. It is *because* her character is not yet formed—not yet rendered utterly mean and contemptible—that I try to remedy, ere it be too late, the effects of your most—most heartless——"

At this point, Mr. Grey left the room; and, for some time, his footsteps were heard crunching to and fro on the little gravel walk. When he came in again his cough was very bad; but Mrs. Grey remained silent, now and then heaving a profound sigh, while her eyes were cast down. When Mr. Grey said, "Forgive me Maria, if I spoke too warmly!" she answered,—

"'Forgive,' William?—~~you~~ don't suppose I was angry?"

And then the pocket-handkerchief was flourished to such good purpose, that Mr. Grey went to bed that night in the comfortable conviction that he was a brute!

Marty sat by Helen's bed-side, and read the story about Haman. When she came to the verse,—

"Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate," she said,—

"Now, wasn't he a wicked, ungrateful man, that Haman? He had everything he wanted—fine clothes, and houses, and money;—and everybody thought him a great man. But, for all that, he'd got such a wicked heart, that he couldn't be happy; because he envied and hated Mordecai! You are too sleepy to-night to hear the rest of it;—but do you know what Haman's envy made him try to do?—To murder Mordecai—the good man that God loved—and all the Jews—God's people! And what happened to him, d'you think?—Why, he was hanged on the very gallows as he'd got ready for Mordecai!"

"I'm glad he was hanged," said Helen.

"But, my poppet, why did Mrs. Howard tell me to read that story to you?"

"Because Marty, I hated Louisa Thomson; and perhaps I should have murdered her!—perhaps!"

"Ah! who knows?" said Marty.

"And Marty, I'm so sorry!—I told Louisa that we moved to the other pew in church, so that the Thomsons might not walk home with us, because mamma said they were so vulgar, and she couldn't bear for Mrs. Howard to see them with us!"

"Ah! you didn't ought to have said that!"

"No Marty; but she had her pink frock on to-day!"

"Think of Haman, dear!"

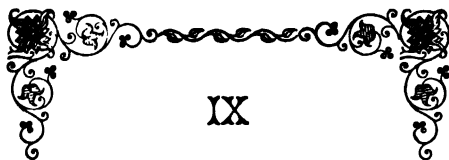
"Yes Marty. I'm sorry; and I'll tell Louisa."

"That's a dear!"

And Helen did tell Louisa; but that young lady did not receive the overture in a pacific manner; for she replied,—

"I told my mamma what you said; and she said, 'Mrs. Grey is a very vulgar woman! She forgets her station! Mrs. Howard called upon us before she knew the Greys; and I asked her to call on them, because Mrs. Grey knew hardly anyone here!'"

And that was the beginning of the rupture with the Thomsons.



A SLIGHT COLD.

AND thus time passed; Mrs. Grey doing her best to infuse what she considered indispensable notions of refinement and "gentility" into Helen's little heart—trying to fill it with love for the "Mammon of Unrighteousness"—pomp, show, fine clothes, fine friends, fine houses;—Mrs. Howard and Marty—the former consciously, the latter unconsciously—doing their best to defeat her aim:—till Helen was ten years of age.

Under their mingled guidance, the child's character had become a strange mixture of good and evil. She loved all that ministered to her passion for show; yet she seldom indulged her tastes at the expense of suffering to others. A war was going on in her heart. Two natures were struggling for the mastery; and which of them would eventually prevail, seemed doubtful. Her generous, impulsive feelings, often overthrew her mother's cold and heartless maxims; yet those feelings were so strongly tintured with pride and self-will, that Mrs. Howard, who had learnt to love her dearly, often sighed in despair, and felt disposed to abandon any further effort for her good.

And thus things were, when, one night in the depth of winter, Mrs. Grey and Helen were sitting over the fire.

"And so, John is coming home altogether,—is he dear?"

"Yes mamma; and I am very glad, and so is Lucy, and so is Mrs. Howard."

"You like John,—don't you, dear?"

"Of course, mamma!—As if anybody could help liking John!"

"Ten years old!—Ten years old!" soliloquised Mrs. Grey, gazing abstractedly into the glowing castle-in-the-air scenery among the red coals, where doubtless she saw visions of orange wreaths, and wedding breakfasts, and pony-carriages.

"How old is John, my dear?"

"Nearly Twenty. How nice it must be, to be twenty!—I wish *I* were twenty!" sighed Helen.

"But my love, girls are always more forward than boys; and in a very short time you will be quite a companion for John. You are very tall for your age!"

Again Mrs. Grey looked into the embers, where she beheld mental bridal parties, innumerable broughams and pairs, and men-servants in livery;—also, wedding breakfasts from Hapsley.

A hard, sharp cough was heard outside; and, the next moment, Mr. Grey entered the house. Marty followed her master into the parlour.

"Why, you're covered with snow!" she exclaimed, seemingly in as great a rage as though he had offered her the deepest affront; "and with such a cough as you've had for these months past!—Ain't you ashamed of yourself, for to go and get drowned and friz in this here way?"

And Marty, indignantly pulling off his coat, held it before him, and then pointed to his soaked boots.

"Marty! Marty! you are incorrigible!" ejaculated her mistress. "Without touching upon the redundancy contained in the expression, 'for to go,' I desire you to refer to your grammar. (Syntax, Rule 12.) But I must correct your fearful inaccuracy with respect to participles. Don't you know,—have I not told you, time after time,—that 'verbs passive are called regular when they form their perfect participle by the addition of *d* or *ed* to the verb; as,—what?"

"Give me a book. Bring me a apple," promptly answered Marty.

"Oh! dear, dear, no!—But never mind!—How could you then, add *ded* to the word *drown*?—How *could* you, Marty?" asked Mrs. Grey in a tone of mild reproach. "And as for the irregular verb, 'To freeze,' I think that if you refer to the column, you will find it, not 'friz,' but—"

"Master, come into the kitchen directly, and change your coat and shoes! Them shoes is too thin for such weather as this!" Marty irreverently interrupted.

"Oh! Marty—Marty!" cried her mistress, in despair. But Marty was gone.

When Mr. Grey returned to the parlour, he shivered, and drew his chair close to the fire; and his cough was incessant. Once or twice he pressed his hand to his side; but his wife did not heed the action. At last Helen crept up to him, and put her arms round his neck.

"Does your side hurt you, papa?"

"Yes darling," he replied, drawing her head to his shoulder; and then he shivered again. In a little while he added, still with his quiet, gentle expression,—

"I think I have a slight cold, Maria. I will go to bed;—perhaps I may be better in the morning."

But the next morning he was worse, instead of better. Mrs. Grey, however, had not time to attend to him; for she was going to a dinner, given to the school children, and Mrs. Howard had promised to take her in the pony-carriage; and she had for some time past been preparing for the occasion a *Nette*, such as, she flattered herself, would rather astonish the Brockleyites. Then, she could not send the page for the doctor; as he was wanted to answer the bell when Mrs. Howard came. So, poor Mr. Grey lay moaning on his bed of sickness; while his wife was revelling in the enjoyment of the glory and *éclat* of being driven to the school in Mrs. Howard's carriage.

When the dinner was at an end, she accepted Mrs. Howard's invitation to return to luncheon; and thus, the hours slipped by, and it was four o'clock ere she returned home.

Then Marty met her with a face of deep anxiety.

"Oh! Missis—Missis! I couldn't bide no longer! I've sent for Dr. Haynes. Oh! Master's took worse! He's so bad!—so bad!"

His wife's conscience smote her. Hastily casting off her finery, she entered her husband's room.

There he lay, with flushed cheek, and quick, oppressed breathing, now and then uttering a feeble moan, as though in great pain.

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She sat down beside him; and a faint ray of pleasure stole across his face, as she took his hand in hers. Helen climbed on to the bed, and, laying her cheek against her father's, burst into tears. After a while the doctor arrived. He looked very serious. Drawing Mrs. Grey aside, he whispered,—
"How is it I was not sent for before it came to this?—Inflammation has been going on for days!"

"He has had a cough for some time; and yesterday morning he was so ill as to be hardly able to go out. When he came in last night, he took to his bed," replied Mrs. Grey.

"You should have sent for me sooner!" he sternly remarked.
"Had I been here last night—or even this morning—"

Again he turned towards the bed, and, his watch in his hand, counted the pulsations of the sufferer.

"He must be bled."

Mrs. Grey broke into a flood of tears, and a passionate storm of "Oh! dear me's!"

"Don't, mamma—you'll hurt poor papa!" said little Helen in a trembling voice. Then, slipping off the bed, she ran to call Marty—good, honest, sterling Marty, who never failed when there was a duty to be done, or an effort to be made;—Marty—a coarse-minded person, who had no nerves, and would not faint at the sight of blood!

But, ere the necessary preparations were completed, the sick man appeared to feel somewhat better.

"I don't think you need bleed me," he muttered. "The pain is not nearly so violent. It is ceasing."

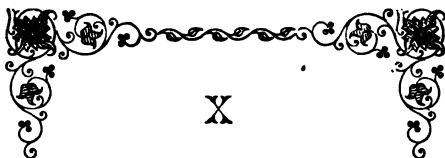
The doctor turned hastily away. Tears rolled down his cheeks; for Mr. Grey was an old and well-loved friend.

"Then he was not so very ill after all!" exclaimed Mrs. Grey, in a tone of voice that betrayed more of triumph over the doctor, and of impatience with her husband, than of joy at the prospect of his recovery.

"He is worse than you think, Madam! I fear mortification has commenced!" whispered the doctor, shortly and sternly.

Poor Marty, who had bent close to him to catch his words, fell on her knees beside the bed.

"Oh! master! master!"



FRIENDS IN NEED.

THE funeral was over.

The widow was sitting with her little girl in her lap. Helen had cried till she could cry no more; and she now sat with her head resting on her mother's shoulder, saying nothing, but now and then heaving a shuddering sigh, as she missed her father's dear mild face from its usual corner by the fire-side, and thought of the cold churchyard, where he lay, covered with snow, with the sharp wind whistling above him.

"Isn't it a pity we didn't know how ill he was, mamma? Isn't it a pity we went to the school-dinner that day? I wish we hadn't!—Oh! I wish we hadn't!"

"How could we know he was so ill, my dear? How was I to know that there was more the matter with him than there was last winter? Don't you remember how ill he was then?"

"Yes, oh, yes!—And he wasn't to go out on cold days, nor to get his feet wet, nor to sit in a draught?"

"But a doctor must go out in *all* weathers, my dear; and when it rains, one must get wet, you know, if one goes out!"

"Yes; but papa ought to have had golloshes, like you and me. Dear papa! he wouldn't afford himself a pair of new boots, nor one of those cloaks to keep the rain off, nor a thing over his mouth;—what is it called?"

"A respirator, my dear."

"Yes mamma. Oh! I wish James had never come here!—I *do* wish it!"

"Why, Helen?"

"Because then papa would have had money enough—the money that went for James's wages—to buy that thing for his mouth, and a coat to keep off the wet.—And don't you wish you hadn't had that new bonnet, mamma? Then, he could have had the golloshes."

"Nonsense, child! that had nothing to do with it!" exclaimed her mother, with some asperity.

Helen looked at the vacant chair opposite, and, missing the kind, consoling glance that used to be hers, burst into tears.

A few days later, Mrs. Howard, who had been most kind in her inquiries, called. There was not a trace of the cold, reserved manner that had till then partially characterised her intercourse with Mrs. Grey. She advanced with both hands extended, and, kissing the widow and her little girl, sat down beside her, still retaining Mrs. Grey's hands. She made no set speech. Her call was not like a formal "visit of condolence." She sat, for a few moments, in silence, pressing the hand that rested in hers. At last Mrs. Grey spoke.

"You are indeed kind, to——" and broke down. She really *felt* touched.

"It has been most sudden and unexpected," Mrs. Howard began; "and he was so good and gentle, that all who knew him must feel sorrow—not for him, but for themselves;—a selfish feeling, but no less a natural one. But, dear Mrs. Grey," she resumed, after a pause, "I have come here, less to offer my sympathy, than my services. Can I, in any way, assist or advise you? Do not scruple to tell me; for we are old friends, you know."

The widow's lips moved nervously; and she tried to speak.

"You are, indeed, good; and I am sorely in want of advice!"

She hesitated; and a faint blush suffused her face. Mrs. Howard observed it, and resumed:—

"My dear Mrs. Grey, you and I have known each other so long, and our children have been such good friends, that there should be no false delicacy between us. Therefore I know you will not misunderstand what I am about to say, but attribute it to its true source;—my deep sympathy, and my anxiety to serve you."

Mrs. Grey gently bowed assent. Mrs. Howard continued:—

"You owe it to this child, not to bow down hopelessly under this heavy blow. You must rouse yourself, to consider what ought to be done. Your poor husband, great as were his talents, had not the chance of laying by, in this village, a provision for yourself and daughter. Had he lived, he would no doubt have been able to do so; but there were so many competitors established in the neighbourhood before his arrival, that the wonder is, how he managed to get on even so well as he did. Now, dear Mrs. Grey (excuse my asking the question),—have you the means of living as you have hitherto done?"

"Oh! dear me! dear me!—no!" exclaimed the widow, wringing her hands. "After defraying the funeral expenses, there will not be left enough even to pay James's and Marty's wages!"

Sorrow is a great leveller. What could have induced Mrs. Grey, a month ago, to make such an admission?

"Have you no relations to whom you can apply for advice or assistance?" Mrs. Howard asked.

"Not one!—Oh, yes!—*one* relation; but *he* is not likely to help me!"

"And who is he?"

"An uncle of Mr. Grey's—a rude vulgar man! He was very fond of my poor husband, who was the orphan child of his only sister. He adopted poor William, brought him up, and intended to make him his heir. William met me, and we became engaged. The old man hated me, because he thought I had an eye to his wealth in marrying William, and also because he pretended to believe that I should not make his nephew happy. Then, to make matters worse, some one reported to him that I had called him a vulgar old tradesman—he had been in trade. So, he swore to William, that, if he married me, he would disinherit him. Perhaps he thought that would deter me from marrying him; it did not, for I did not believe he was in earnest. Just before our marriage, the old fellow made a final attempt to dissuade his nephew from it; but William defended me against his uncle's aspersions, and the two parted in anger. Well, soon after, the old man (he wasn't so old either) married again, and had two

sons, one of whom died in infancy. Since then, we have lost sight of him. Had he not married, I should have thought it my duty, for Helen's sake, to tolerate his vulgarity, and shew him some little attention; but, as it was, I was only too glad to be rid of him—and I took care to express my sentiments to those who would, I knew, convey them faithfully to him. Fancy, having in your house, a person who would talk with your servants as though they were equals!—who would sit down in the cottages of the common peasantry, and make himself quite at home there! That was his style!”

A very, very faint tinge of sarcasm was blended in the smile that hovered around Mrs. Howard's lips, as she replied,—

“Now, however, it is your duty, for Helen's sake, to endeavour to propitiate him. Have you his address?”

“I think I could procure it.”

“Write to him. Tell him of your sudden loss. Appeal to him in behalf of William's child. Conclude with an expression of regret for your share in the estrangement. If he was fond of your husband, he will not let his child want for anything. Meanwhile, if you are in need of immediate pecuniary assistance, let me—(pray don't refuse!)—be your banker. For Helen's sake, if not for your own, it must be so. You will not pain me by a refusal.”

Mrs. Grey did *not* pain her. James was paid; but Marty, declaring that her last wages were untouched, and that money burnt her fingers, and that she was afraid she should grow proud if she had too much in her pocket, begged her mistress to keep it for her.

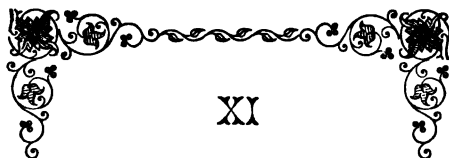
“For,” she added, “them banks is always a'breakin' or a'doin' something or other as they didn't ought to! You never know when your money's safe!”

So Mrs. Grey, like many other selfish, worldly people, found friendship from those whom she had only used for her own purposes, and would at any time have cast off, had it been expedient so to do. She accepted the trust, with an air of mild and patronising condescension—as though she were conferring—not receiving—a favor.

“Well,” she thought, “who would have supposed that Marty was so fond of money, as to prefer trusting it to me, rather than let it go out of the house! Dear me! Dear

me! what mercenary creatures we are! But perhaps she did it in order to curry favor with me. Ah! I shouldn't wonder! As for Mrs. Howard, she is fond of arranging for other people. I daresay she likes to lay them under obligations; and, no doubt, she likes to be thought a woman of business. Besides, what is the money to her?"

Oh! Mrs. Grey! Mrs. Grey! why take so much trouble to throw off that pleasant burden of gratitude, whose fruits are love, and gentleness, and sweetness of spirit, and trust in God's creatures! A dear, dear burden, which none who have once felt its sweet influence, would willingly forego! Gratitude!—how it softens and humanizes, when indulged!—how it hardens, when resisted! An ungrateful heart, which, in its arrogance and self-sufficiency, refuses to drink of the delicious draught set before it, is one of the greatest curses under God's sun!



A WINDFALL.

LETTER from Mr. Stubmore to Mrs. Grey.

"MADAM,—I have received your letter. Being a plain-spoken man, I will at once come to the point.

"You and I were never very partial to each other. I believed that you looked upon my nephew as my heir, and that you married him for that reason alone. I therefore disliked you.

"But I am an old man now; and I will not allow my rancorous feelings to accompany me down the hill of life; nor will I visit on William's child the errors of her mother.

"I shall allow you two hundred a year—quite enough to support you comfortably. Do not thank me;—two hundred a year is nothing, when spared from an income so large as mine—nor do I grant it from any love to you. I have no wish to see you, or to hear from you, except in acknowledgment of the quarterly remittance.

"I have the honor to be, Madam,

"Yours obediently

"W. STUBMORE."

After the first paroxysm of delight, called forth by this announcement of an income beyond that enjoyed by her late husband, Mrs. Grey began to criticise the letter.

"Unpolished! Unrefined! Coarse! Low-minded! And all, because I once cut him when I was with some very genteel people, who, I feared, would pronounce him vulgar! Ah! I remember they repeated to him what I said of him.—Very wrong of them!"

Yes, Mrs. Grey, very wrong;—but not half so wrong, as to disparage the kind friend of years, whose unpretending generosity had been shewn to you on more occasions than one—who had stood your friend when none were by to save you from condemnation—who, when he heard you maligned, (nay, not *maligned*—for were you not pronounced “cold-hearted,” “selfish,” “worldly,” “time-serving?”) defended you, with the tears in his honest eyes!—who did not give you up, until you had afforded him proof upon proof of your utter want of principle and heart!—who would not then have turned against you, had he not felt that his adopted child’s happiness depended on his being separated from you! Ah! Mrs. Grey, these things tell against us in the long run, depend upon it!

That night, the desolate widow sat down to make a calculation of what might be done with two hundred a year.

“Now, shall I,” she thought, “dismiss Marty? She is so irreclaimably uncouth! What do you think, love?”

“What, mamma?”

“I am thinking, my dear, of sending away Marty, and of engaging a pretty French maid in her place—”

But Helen burst into a paroxysm of sobs.

“No! No! No!—Marty shan’t go!—she *shan’t*!”

As soon as she was a little calmer, Mrs. Grey returned to the charge.

“But, my dear child, she is so very ignorant and awkward!”

“No, she isn’t!—she isn’t,” exclaimed the child with vehemence. “She’s a darling!—and she shan’t go!”

“Now, Helen——”

“She’s getting on so well with her grammar!—she knows all the examples!” And Helen looked piteously at her mamma.

“But she does not know one word of French, love! Every lady of fashion has a French maid, my dear!”

“I’ll teach Marty French, mamma, if you’ll only let her stay. Indeed, I couldn’t live without Marty!”

Mrs. Grey had to give up the point; and Helen set to work the next day to teach Marty French; and with such success, that the following night she wished her mistress good night in the sentence,—

“Bong swore, Mad—” when she stuck fast, and looked ruefully at Helen, who prompted,—

"Go on Marty;—you were just going to say it! Mad—what? Something that belongs to the hand—"

"Bong swore, Mad-glove," triumphantly ejaculated Marty.

"No, Marty—not 'glove,' but very lear! 'Arm,' you should have said."

"Bong swore, Mad-arm!" said Marty, disappearing.

"Doesn't she talk French beautifully already, mamma? And to-morrow morning, you'll hear her say 'Bon matin.' She'll remember that; because I told her to think of the short for Matthew Tanner, the baker's boy. Oh! Marty is not at all stupid. You'll let her stop, mamma, won't you?"

(By the bye, Marty went rather beyond her instructions next morning; for, at a signal from her little mistress, she exclaimed, "Bong Mat. Tanner.")

A few days later, John returned home; and it was not long ere he made his way to the cottage. The widow received him, almost with open arms.

"How good of you, to remember us, Mr. John! I hardly dared to hope for the honor of a visit from you, who must have been so sought and admired everywhere.

"You are mistaken," replied John, laughingly. "When I have been at home, it has been for a short time only; and of late I have been on the continent; so that, on the principle of 'out of sight, out of mind,' no one at Brockley cares much about me!—Certainly I am not to be named in the same category with Harvey, the curate (possessor of the trim whiskers), and Masters, the attorney;—two very fascinating young *gents*, in the estimation of the Brockley fair ones!"

"But, my dear Mr. John, they have not your noble air! You look like a young duke!"

"Do young dukes look differently from other people? I would far rather look like an English gentleman, than like all the dukes in the world!" he exclaimed, rather vehemently. In a moment, however, he laughed.

"You are so modest!" pursued his admirer. "You will not allow your own merits! I suppose you deny that you are handsome—*distingué*—clever—well-built——"

John made a summary rush for the door. Mrs. Grey stopped. He returned.

"Will you let Helen spend the day with us to-morrow? I

want to renew my acquaintance with her. How changed she is!—quite a grown-up person!”

Helen immediately placed her feet in the first position, and sat very upright.

“There, Helen, don’t look so dignified, or you’ll make me die of laughter!” said John.

The first position vanished in a moment.

“Good-night.”

“Good-night, John. Marty, wish John good-night in French, there’s a dear!”

“Bong swore, Moon-seer,” said Marty, felicitous in her recollection; for Helen had told her to think of a profane man with a spy-glass, looking at the moon.

John’s laughter was heard dying away in the distance, with the sound of his footsteps.



A MOTHER'S LESSONS.

JOHN, Lucy, and Helen, were making a snow castle. When it was finished, John took possession of it, and defended it against the besiegers, who pelted him vigorously with snow-balls; which pelting he returned with such good will, that the assailants were at last obliged to raise the siege. Then they went into the house, and sat, all three, on the low couch before the fire.

"What are you thinking of, little red-cheeks?" asked John; for Helen's eyes were dilating in such a way, as she gazed into the red coals, as to betray that she was contemplating some mental vision contained in them.

"I was thinking," she replied, in a musing tone, "how nice it would be to have a castle of my own, with plenty of fine things about me, and a carriage with four horses, and a man-servant to open the door!"

That was Helen's dream—a man-servant! No wonder; for had she not heard her mother lamenting, from time immemorial, the want of that appendage?

John was amused, and was about to reply; when Helen resumed, with the utmost gravity,—

"I don't mean a Johnnie Taylor.—I mean a *real* man-servant, like yours—only covered with gold."

"What?—his face and hands?" asked John.

"No;—how silly!—his coat."

"Do you think you would be any happier if you *had* a 'man-servant covered with gold,' to open the door?"

"Of course I should!" Helen indignantly replied; and then added, "—and a castle!"

"And are you so very fond of fine things?"

"Yes—oh, yes! I long for everything I see that's beautiful; and I would give everything in the world to be rich!"

The little girl spoke in a sort of rapture, and clasped her hands together, as if involuntarily.

"Oh! Mammon! Mammon!" sighed John to his mother.

Mrs. Howard spoke:—"Helen, it is both foolish and wicked, to care so much about riches!"

"But mamma does!"

An awkward reply. In a minute, however, Mrs. Howard found an answer.

"But, do you not always hear your mamma say, that she does not care for luxury on her *own* account?—that it is for *your* sake that she desires it? You never hear your mamma say, 'I long for everything that is rich and beautiful.' She says, 'I do not value these things for *myself*; but I do, for my child.'"

Helen made no answer.

"Now, you have no child for whose sake to desire these things. You covet them for your own pleasure; and if you give way to this feeling, you will grow up cold-hearted and selfish, and no one will love you!"

Helen remained silent; and, as she gazed into the fire, the castles and the man-servant to open the door, vanished, one by one.

On her return home, she related this conversation to her mother, who, after a little thought, replied,—

"Mrs. Howard is a good person, my dear, but somewhat mistaken now and then—especially when she says that the goods of this world are to be despised. She will find out her mistake some day! But she acknowledged that I did well to be anxious, on your account, about worldly advantages?"

"No, mamma; she said it was very different from my caring for things for *myself*;—that you were not so selfish as I was."

"Never mind dear;—that is what she meant. Now, though you have no little girl whom you would like to make rich, you have a *mother*——"

"Oh! yes, dear mamma! I see now! and I'll tell Mrs. Howard!"

"No, love; it is not always wise to tell all we feel; and since it pains Mrs. Howard to know that you have a due regard for riches (like a good, prudent little girl), it would be unkind to let her imagine that you do care for them. It will be better to let her fancy you do not."

"But won't that be deceitful?"

"My dear child—no! As long as we live in the world, we must conform to its habits. It is not deceitful, merely to refrain from expressing all we feel. When deaf old Mr. Bradshaw calls here, and drops his snuff about the room, and soils the carpet with his muddy boots, and makes me hoarse with bawling to him, I receive him with smiles; I don't say (what I feel) 'you are a disagreeable, dirty, ugly, old person, and I wish you would not come here!'—no, that would hurt his feelings! I am silent—I do not say what I think. Is that deceitful?"

Poor Helen was not reasoner enough to refute this casuistry; so she reverted to another part of Mrs. Howard's discourse.

"But, would riches make me selfish, mamma?"

"Certainly not, my dear. When we are poor, we are far more likely to be selfish; for then, we have to think, and think, about every farthing, and can never give anything to others."

Mrs. Grey forgot where it is written, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee!" besides many other such words, which are recorded in refutation of her theory. Like the poor widow, who cast into the treasury all that she had, there are many who, out of an income of one hundred a year, relieve more pain—perform more acts of unselfishness—than the fortunate possessors of thousands! It only wants the *will to give pleasure*—that is all. A kindly smile, bestowed at just the right time, upon the veriest outcast, may do more good than the magnificent donation that goes towards the building of a church. The smile may save a soul;—the church might have been built without the donation. Talk not of poverty standing in the way of the performance of benevolent actions! We can all do *some* good—either to our equals, or to our inferiors, or (nay, dispense not the thought!)

—to even the poor dumb creation! He who removes even a poor worm from the path, where else the careless foot of some passer-by had crushed him, does a little good—saves a little pain—adds an atom to the short life of pleasure granted to the poor helpless insect. Let us remember this!

"Ah!" cried Helen, "if I am ever rich, how nice it will be, to be able to give away!"

"Yes dear, perhaps;—with a due regard to economy and prudence."

Helen's enthusiasm abated.

"Above all, my dear, you should beware of the unreasonable folly of impoverishing *yourself*, for the sake of others. Now, the other day, you wanted to give the money that was to buy your new dancing-shoes, to Mrs. Roberts, to purchase a pair of shoes for her little girl. That was silly—over-doing the thing! The children of the poor are *accustomed* to hardships, and don't feel them. Depend upon it, little Mary is far more comfortable in her old shoes than she would be in new ones."

"Yes! but she has dreadful chilblains, and her toes are coming out of her shoes!"

"She is used to it my dear, depend upon it, and does not feel it."

"Well, *I* should never get used to chilblains."

"No, dear; because you have been delicately brought up, and have more susceptible feelings. Another thing I must impress upon you Helen; and that is—to have a little more regard to personal appearance;—it is of such great importance!"

"But is it right to be vain? Mrs. Howard says not!"

"Vain?—no, my dear; but we ought all to make the best of the personal advantages that are given us. It is our duty!"

Oh, dear!—how apt we all are, to fulfil just that duty which is most pleasant to us! The woman who is fond of her husband will think of him, morning, noon, and night; will work for him, submit to all his caprices, adopt all his notions—right or wrong—in short, lose her own identity in his;—and, in thus doing, she chooses to believe that she is performing a duty. She who is idolatrously fond of her children, will worship them, and let her husband go to the wall; and then

she will have it that she is performing her duty. She who has neither husband nor children, will, perhaps, devote the whole of her time and energies to the poor, or to charitable institutions, to the total exclusion of her own kith and kin, who have certainly some claim upon her. While she who is endowed with intellect, will devote her whole energies to its cultivation, believing—or choosing to believe—that to be her duty (simply because it is pleasanter to her than anything else!)

The fact is, *Duty* is a mighty convenient word; in many instances, being nothing more than a free translation of the word, *Selfishness*.

Helen's notions were becoming terribly mystified. She said nothing. Her mother continued :—

“A desire for admiration is most natural and pleasing in the young;—without it, a woman would be the most unloved and unloveable creature in existence. For my part, whenever I see a young girl careless of the effect she produces, I always imagine she is *too confident* of receiving admiration, to seek the means of securing it! I trust that you, love, will not grow up so unfeminine, as to be insensible to the approbation of your fellow creatures; and, as you are not, strictly speaking, pretty, (though you have good eyes and hair, and a clear skin, for a brunette) it is more incumbent on you, than it would otherwise be, to cultivate external appearance.”

Poor Helen! what an education for her! Had anyone told Mrs. Grey that she was doing her best to instil pride, selfishness, vanity, envy, dissimulation, avarice, and irreligion, into the heart of her child, how indignantly would she have denied it! Yet so it was; and the seeds fell into a soft and fertile soil. Some were weeded out, but many took root there; and, as the child's character grew and strengthened, her good friends sighed over the ruin of that which had once promised to be so fair a harvest.

So time passed away, till Helen was seventeen.



THAT LOUISA THOMSON.

MRS. GREY had desired James (another James; for James the first had struck for more wages, as he grew older; and his appetite had increased with his years) to say "not at home," to all callers; and she and Helen were busily engaged in sorting a heterogeneous mass of dirty finery, out of which they purposed constructing a *toilette* that should render them irresistibly attractive the next evening, when they were going to a little party at Mrs. Howard's. Various dresses and other garments were hung about the room on sofas and chairs; and many times did the pair wander from one relic of antiquity to the other, uncertain which to choose as the basis of operations.

"I am in favor of the pink barège, mamma; I think it is the least faded," said Helen with a care-worn expression of face.

"But, if Louisa Thomson should wear a pink silk, my dear! That girl is capable of *anything*; and if she had the least idea that you would wear pink barège, she would wear pink silk to eclipse you!—she is so selfish!"

"Blue does not suit me, mamma; or else—this blue tarlatane——"

"Oh, no! not to be thought of love! It is of such importance that you should look well to-night—of all nights!"

"Why, mamma?—To mortify Louisa?"

"No, dear, no. At least, yes—of course. After all, I think this white tarlatane, with the scarlet dots, will not look

very dirty by candle-light!—Marty—Marty, just draw the curtains, and bring in the candles, will you? I want to see how this dress will look at night."

Marty obeyed.

"It will do, my dear—that it will!" said Mrs. Grey, with as much emphasis as though the fate of a kingdom hung upon her decision. "Marty, iron out this dress, and make it look as well as possible, for Miss Helen. I want her to look very well to-morrow night."

"Bless her heart!" thought Marty, carrying away the object of discussion, "as if she didn't always look beautiful!—As if I wouldn't iron out *myself*—yes, with a red hot iron, too!—for that dear lamb!"

"Now Helen, my love, which of these dresses shall I wear? Which do you think most becoming? For your sake, my sweet child, I always try to appear as well dressed and genteel as possible."

"This black silk, mamma——"

"No, dear; black makes me look so old!"

"This green brocade, mamma."

"Too heavy, dear, for an occasion like the present. No, I think this pink *chinoise* would be both suitable and becoming—with black lace in my hair. Black lace, do you think love?—or white?"

"Whatever you may wear, you are sure to look well, dear mamma," said Helen; not only because she honestly thought her mother the most beautiful woman under the sun, but because she instinctively felt that such a speech would give pleasure to the hearer.

"Dear little flatterer!" said Mrs. Grey, skipping playfully from before the glass to where her daughter was seated, and bestowing on her a tepid kiss.

So, the next evening, the pink *chinoise* and spotted muslin were donned, and, in a hired car, with James the second on the box, they arrived at the Howards'. Mrs. Grey, maintaining that it was "genteel" to go late, did not start till an hour after the time named by Mrs. Howard; so that, when she and Helen entered the drawing-room, the party, consisting of about forty, had assembled.

The pair glanced round the room. Horror of horrors!

Louisa Thomson was attired in a white muslin dress, similar to Helen's, only that the spots were of *silk*, instead of worsted, and the dress was quite new! Louisa's gloves, too, were immaculate, and fitted to perfection; while Mrs. Grey's and Helen's were on duty for the third time, having been diligently scoured with bread-crumbs; and, having been originally purchased for one shilling and sixpence, were square and nobby at the finger-ends, and wrinkled across the back.

Helen sat down in exceeding ill-humour, determined to be pleased with nothing that night.

"Look at her;" whispered Mrs. Grey, with reference to the owner of the well-fitting gloves; "she is doing all she can to attract Mr. Harvey! As if Mr. Masters were not good enough for her!"

"She shan't have him though!" whispered Helen, with heightened colour.

Before long, however, Mr. Harvey (of the whiskers—a "very nice young man!") joined Louisa. Helen's brow clouded over more and more. She was aroused from her reverie by John, who sat down beside her.

"You are in the dismal to-night, Helen. What is the matter?"

"I have a head-ache."

"Not a bit of it, Helen! You have a *temper*-ache!"

"You are very unkind," she said.

"A doctor can't cure pain till he knows its cause!" he replied.

Helen looked up quietly; for she did not choose that John should know the cause of her ill-temper. He continued:—

"How happy and good-natured Miss Thomson looks! Why don't you imitate her?"

"Oh! you always liked milk-maids!" she could not help saying.

"Ahem!" said John; for he saw how the land lay.

Just then, some one asked Miss Thomson to sing; so she went to the piano. Helen could not sing. The move was, however, satisfactory, inasmuch as Mr. Harvey crossed the room to speak to her. Mrs. Grey rose, and walked to the piano, and, after complimenting the songstress on her performance, sat down with her at the other end of the room.

Helen felt more amiable ; and as Mr. Harvey uttered a string of nothings, she responded with such animation, that John, surprised at the sudden change, left her, and joined Louisa.

How tedious that Mr. Harvey was ! Helen no longer felt angry. She was sad—very sad—without knowing why. In a little while, however, her faction was reinforced by the addition of Mr. Masters and a stout old gentleman with a bald head ; and, determined that John should not think she was envious of Louisa, she laughed, and chatted, and responded to the cackle of her companions in their own strain.

Then supper was announced ; and, still attended by her trio, she entered the supper-room.

On her return to the drawing-room, she threw herself wearily down beside Lucy, saying,—

“How nice you look to-night, Lucy !”

She could afford to admire her friend, whose simple dress and unformed figure, made her appear almost a child, and were certainly not calculated to attract the notice of gentlemen. For Lucy's education had preserved her mind in all its youth and freshness ; while Helen's had made her, in appearance and manner, a woman before her time.

“Do I ?” replied Lucy, in an indifferent tone, as though she were thinking of something else.

“Lucy, you will never be a grown-up person ! Now, I don't believe you care the least in the world how you look ! You care more about your roses, and birds, and kittens, and rabbits, than about your looks !”

“Of course I do !” she laughingly replied ; “I am not old enough to care about my looks. Besides, with my wide mouth, and turn-up nose, what would be the use of caring how I look ? I like to be neat and lady-like ; but I think dress a bore.”

“Oh ! how *can* you ?—Now, Lucy, with your nice, waving hair, and your large blue eyes, you ought to be far more attractive than you are !”

Lucy looked uncomfortable. “Don't, Helen !—I wouldn't be vain for the world ; and if I were to believe you, I am afraid I should be !”

At this moment John entered the room, and approached Helen. Lucy, seeing a young lady seated alone, with no one to talk to, went to try to amuse her.

"Well, ma'am?" said John to his companion.

"Well—what?" she snappishly rejoined.

"Oh!—little black dog on the back again!—eh? Is the little temper put out?"

She half rose, as if to leave him; but he detained her.

"I don't wonder," he said, "at your being dissatisfied with yourself!"

"Why?"

"Because you have been behaving very absurdly this evening."

"How rude you are!"

"You have!—you have!—you have!" he persisted. "You talked the most arrant nonsense just now; not one word of sense did you utter for full one hour and a half."

"You must have been deeply interested in your *own* conversation, if you could not help listening to mine!" she retorted.

"I had no chance of hearing what my companion was saying;—you laughed and talked so loudly!"

"Whatever I do, you are sure to find fault! It is impossible to please you!"

"You don't try."

"I should think not! That *would* be reversing the general order of things!"

He burst out laughing.

"Why, Helen, one would think you were a woman!"

"So I am!" she replied, with extreme dignity.

"Nonsense, child!—you are not yet—at least, you ought not to be—out of leading-strings! Look at Lucy! she is of the same age as you; and yet how fresh and young she looks! And there is Miss Thomson, who is twenty-one, yet whose manners are not so formed as yours!"

"If you admire her so much, you had better return to her."

"Very well."

He rose. Helen looked up with tearful eyes.

"No, I didn't mean *really*, John. I believe I *am* in a bad temper!"

"Then get out of it, dear Helen, as soon as possible."

"I will try."

"And, to help you to conquer your ill-temper, I will tell you what called it forth.—I noticed you as you entered the

room. Your face was flushed—you were well and becomingly dressed—your hair was beautifully smooth; and altogether, my dear, you looked—well, never mind. You glanced at Miss Thomson; and a change came over you. You saw that she was better dressed than you were; and you envied her; and that feeling has made you unhappy."

Helen sighed. "I believe you are right John;—you always are. But it is provoking to think that Louisa can eclipse me, only because she can afford to dress better!"

"You silly child! Do you think the attention gained by dress, worth having? My dear, believe me, when the *face* is dressed in smiles, it is better, and more attractive, than all the white—what do you call it?—in the world!"

"But I can't look pleased, when I'm not, John!"

"No; Heaven forbid that you should! But you can destroy the well of bitterness in your heart; then, the waters that spring from it will be clear and sweet."

She thought of his sunny expression—a certain genial warmth and kindliness that always beamed on his face, whether in joy or sorrow; and she felt humbled and contrite.

"My dear Helen, all your faults spring from a *worldly disposition*—a state of mind which is growing on you. Try to curb your excessive love of the externals of life—the mammon of a woman's world. Try to check it; or it will poison the spring of all that is good within you."

He was not jesting now. His earnest, truthful eyes were bent upon her with a yearning anxiety that pleased, yet pained her. They were silent for some time; then, as soon as she could trust herself to speak, she said, very gently,—

"Thank you; you are right. I have been much to blame."

Soon after, Mrs. Grey, who had been privately informed that the car was ready, and that the man would charge if it were kept waiting, summoned Helen; and they left.

"My dear, how earnestly you and John were talking? What was he saying to you, love?"

"We talked about my dress and Louisa Thomson's, and other things," replied Helen; acting upon her mother's precept, that to conceal part of the truth, was no deceit.

"Helen, do you think John is in——"

"What, mamma?"

"Never mind, my dear. Perhaps I had better not say."



CROSS PURPOSES.

"WHAT a delightful evening we spent with you on Tuesday!" exclaimed Mrs. Grey, addressing Mrs. Howard.

"I am glad you enjoyed it."

"What a fine, noble-looking youth Mr. John has grown!"

His mother smiled rather drily, as she replied,—

"You were always an admirer of his."

Mrs. Grey resumed:—

"With his advantages—his fine figure, and handsome face—he might aspire to the hand of a duchess!"

"You over-rate my son's attractions. I cannot see that he has either 'a fine figure,' or 'a handsome face.' He has a manly look, which is, in my opinion, all that is necessary. His features are not regular; and the attraction of his face lies in its expression of goodness and intellect—qualities far more rare and valuable than the external ones you so kindly impute to him."

"True, dear Mrs. Howard; but I was speaking *merely* of externals. All who have the happiness and honor of knowing Mr. John, cannot fail to appreciate his faultless disposition!"

"Nay, not 'faultless,'" remonstrated her friend. "John is honest and straightforward; but he is too unbending—too uncompromising in his opinions—too prone to expect perfection from others. His pride, too, is a great defect in his character. If he trusts, and is deceived, he makes no allowance for the weakness, or the temptations, of the person who has been so faithless. He nurses up a bitter sense of the

injury; and though he would not allow himself in any act of revenge, he yields to the bitter vindictive spirit which is the next thing to it. John wants humility; and I fear that he will never gain it till his spirit has been in some measure quelled by some of those hard trials which must almost inevitably fall to the lot of a man constituted as he is."

"Well, dear Mrs. Howard, it may be as you say; but I confess, I cannot quite agree with you. At all events, the very faults which meet your disapproval, would be all the more likely to win the admiration of young ladies, who admire a lofty hero, and seldom stop to analyse character, when the *tout ensemble* charms their fancy. As I said, Mr. John might aspire to the hand of a *duchess*!"

Forgetting what she had been saying about pride, Mrs. Howard slightly drew herself up, as she answered,—

"I do not consider that my son would *aspire*, were he to seek the hand of even an empress! When a man is uncompromising in his integrity, and above stooping to ask a favor of anyone, he is the equal of any woman on earth! And as to rank, or wealth, my son is, thank God! perfectly insensible to their influence. For my own part, I would rather see him married to a gentle, loving girl, in his own sphere of life, than mated with any duchess that ever was born."

"How very sensible!—and so like you, dear Mrs. Howard! Then you do not care for fortune, in your son's wife?"

"Certainly not; he is well enough off to be able to dispense with that consideration."

As Mrs. Grey and Helen walked home, the following conversation took place between them:—

"A very unworldly woman—Mrs. Howard."

"Yes, mamma; I always thought so."

"Now, many mothers," pursued Mrs. Grey, "would expect their sons to make a very good match;—and Mr. John is so attractive and agreeable!"

No answer from Helen.

"Don't you think so, my dear?"

"I like John very much."

"And I think he likes you, Helen!"

"Of course he does, mamma!" she exclaimed rather impatiently.

"She will be a lucky girl, that catches him!" Mrs. Grey continued.

"I don't see it," argued her daughter. "John is very nice, and kind, and all that; but he is not so very handsome, or rich, or young, as to make him so *exceedingly* desirable."

Helen was in an ill-humour, because John had been from home, and she had elicited from his mother that he had gone to return a book to Louisa Thomson.

"Well, my dear, I don't understand you; but, mark my words!—John is not to be despised! You are not likely to meet with anyone richer, and handsomer, and younger—if you were, I should not advise you to think of John; for it is the duty of all of us not to despise those worldly advantages thrown by a bountiful Providence in our way)—therefore, you had better not despise him."

"Despise him! As if I ever did, or could!" exclaimed Helen, with flashing eyes and heightened colour. In a few moments she resumed, very sadly:—"Oh, mamma! don't talk in that way! I can't bear to hear you! You mean it for my good; but don't, dearest mamma, let your love for me make you grow worldly, and prompt you to teach me also to be worldly!"

Her eyes were dim with tears, and were cast down; so that she did not see some one approaching.

"Have you been calling on my mother?" asked John; for it was he. "I wish I had been at home!"

"Yes, indeed—we were quite disappointed at not seeing you," replied Mrs. Grey.

Helen felt annoyed; but she said nothing, and walked on, still in silence, Mrs. Grey and John talking on indifferent topics. When they reached the cross-road which led to the village, Mrs. Grey suddenly remembered that she had business there.

"And yet," she said, "I have such a sore throat, that I dare not stay out later. Helen, my dear, will you call at Miss Westall's, and beg her to come to me to-morrow morning to alter that dress?"

"Yes mamma. Good-bye John." But Mrs. Grey interposed:

"My dear child, it is getting too late for you to be out alone. It will be dusk before long;—these October evenings close so suddenly."

"I am often out much later than this," pleaded Helen.

"Yes love—in the summer!"

"Helen, I choose to go with you," interrupted John. "It's no use, your looking cross!"

And, wishing Mrs. Grey good-bye, he walked slowly along beside his companion.

"What's gone wrong, this time, Helen?"

"Nothing," was the prompt reply; and she relapsed into silence.

"Oh!—'Nothing!'—Very well."

"Why do you mock me? It is very provoking!"

"Because you are acquiring the habit of behaving very artificially, and very absurdly;—of yielding to every unamiable impulse that arises; and of checking every good one."

"Are you yourself so perfect," she retorted, "that you have the right to find fault with me?"

"No! but you faults are beginning to obscure your good qualities——"

She interrupted him:—

"Suppose I were to notice *your* faults, as you do mine?—a nice character *your's* would be!"

"I should feel obliged if you did notice my faults; but you would not take the trouble; you don't care enough about me."

A silence. He resumed:—

"Besides, I am so much older than you," (he spoke rather bitterly), "that I have the right to advise you."

"Here is the shop," exclaimed Helen; and, walking in, she delivered her mother's message.

"How you are changing!" said John, as they walked towards home. "You used to be such a nice, reasonable little girl! Now, you are growing so conceited and self-willed, that no one can control you!"

"You are polite! *All* are not of your opinion, however!"

"Helen, your head is completely turned! You think yourself a woman;—you think yourself good-looking;—you are mad for admiration;—you can't bear anyone who will not flatter you.—Why, you are little better than a child in the nursery; and should be thinking of your dolls and toys, instead of foolish, senseless compliments!"

"I'm *not* a child!—and I don't value compliments;—and you know it!"

"I don't know anything of the sort. I only know that you seemed pleased enough to receive them."

"Oh! I suppose I am not to speak to Mr. Harvey, eh?"

"Nonsense, Helen!—don't, for one instant, insinuate that I could be—that I could think you admired Mr. Harvey!"

"Why not?"

"Because, young as you are, you have too much sense to be flattered by an occasional used-up compliment from a fellow whose only recommendations are, a soft voice, and a pair of well-trimmed whiskers! Helen, be more true to yourself. Be the same fresh, impulsive, warm-hearted creature, that you were! Oh! don't grow worldly, Helen!—don't belie your own true woman's nature, by assuming the manners and speeches of those who have the *name* alone of women!"

But Helen was too much annoyed by some of his previous words (especially those in which he pronounced her a *child*), to allow herself to be mollified.

"It is very mean of you," she said, "to speak against Mr. Harvey, just because he is good-looking, and I like him!"

"You do? I was not aware the *penchant* was so violent!" said John, offended in his turn. "I trust it is mutual!"

Helen was determined that John should confess it *was* mutual; but she said nothing. Soon after, they arrived at the cottage, and coldly bade each other good evening.

Helen's irritation soon cooled down. "For," she reasoned with herself—(she could be reasonable enough when she chose)—"John was certainly very rude; but I provoked him. Now, what was it made me cross, I wonder? Oh! I know. First of all, I was angry with John, for going to the Thomsons—because I don't like Louisa. That was wrong! Then, I was angry because mamma talked in that odd way about him,—as if he had any notion of marrying me, or I any notion of marrying at all, yet! It was unjust of me, to be angry with him for that! Well, then I was annoyed because mamma said we were so disappointed he was not at home—that *did* provoke me! I suppose it was all those things put together, that made me cross and unjust. But John was to blame too. He had no business to call me a child, and yet to find fault with me as though I were a woman. He was very rude! I wonder if he is in love with Louisa? Oh! how I hate all this

marrying, and love! I do wish mamma hadn't put anything of the sort into my head; I shall never again be able to treat John as I did before! I wish dear mamma thought a little more about herself, and less about me—I should be much happier then!—No, that's ungrateful—I won't think it!"

"That child is getting spoilt!" said John to his mother, on his return from his walk with Helen. "She has all the notions of a girl of twenty, or more. She will not bear to be told of her faults;—that mother of her's is trying to make her as worldly as herself."

"Marriage will set it all right, John," said his mother, soothingly.

"Aye; but not if she marry a shallow-pated coxcomb like that Harvey!"

"Hush, John! be more charitable in your judgments! Would the great man after whom you are named, and whom I should like to see you resemble, have passed such harsh censure?"

"You are right, mother," he sadly replied. His mother continued;—

"But surely there is no question of her marrying Mr. Harvey?"

"No, no; I spoke foolishly;—don't let us talk any more about it. Helen is a dear girl; but her mother is ruining her!"

Mrs. Howard looked steadily at her son; and his eyes sank before her gaze. She pressed his hand.

"My dear John, do not let your *fancy* lead you astray. Be guided by your reason—your judgment. I will not attempt to bias you; for I do not feel clear to express an opinion."

* * * *

A few nights after, the Greys and Howards met at a little party given by the Thomsons, whom Mrs. Grey had at last succeeded in somewhat pacifying. Helen had been more than usually anxious about her toilet, and had succeeded better than she had done on the evening of Mrs. Howard's party. Mrs. Grey, as usual, chose to be so late, that they had all been assembled some time before her arrival. John was seated beside Louisa Thomson. Helen's brow grew black as night; and when Mr. Harvey took the vacant chair beside her, she greeted him with much apparent pleasure.

Mr. Harvey belonged to that class of young gentlemen denominated "dears" and "loves" by underbred young ladies; and had what they term, "such a grand look!"—"An air of such conscious superiority!"

"How cruel of you, to arrive so late," said the fascinating Harvey, looking unutterable things.

Helen had for some time—that is for some weeks—privately believed that Mr. Harvey was immensely taken with her. She glanced furtively at John, and saw that he was watching her. She replied, with what she intended for sarcasm, but which would have sounded far more like *spite*, if Mrs. Grey's "genteel" daughter could have been capable of indulging so vulgar a sentiment:—

"I don't think we have lost much by our late arrival. It does not seem to be very brilliant!"

"There are two, at all events, who don't appear to be dull," he replied, with reference to John and Louisa.

"Oh! Miss Thomson is so desperately anxious for admiration, that the near approach of a gentleman is enough to render her animated; and Mr. Howard feels flattered, of course!" was Helen's answer.

Mrs. Grey had been watching the pair on the other side of the room. She now rose and approached Louisa.

"My dear, I am dying for a song! My Helen is so busy with her needle, and in the house" (that was meant for John!) "that she has little time for practising music. Will you oblige me?"

Miss Thomson, who was a good-natured girl, readily complied with her request. Mrs. Grey's object was accomplished. John, off duty, sauntered across the room towards Helen; while Mr. Harvey walked to the piano.

"Well Helen," said John, "is it to be peace, or war, to-night?"

Helen was doubly annoyed. She had felt provoked at witnessing his laughing conversation with Louisa; and she was now really ashamed of her mother's bold manœuvre to draw him off, so she replied, very coldly,—

"'Peace,' by all means. You want to begin one of your endless discussions; but I am tired of them. Besides, it is very rude to talk while music is going on."

"So it is. I stand corrected!" said John; and not a word was exchanged till the song was over.

Then he tried to lead her to talk on indifferent subjects. "How was Marty's love affair progressing?"—"She did not know: she did not concern herself with such matters."—"Did she like the book he had lent her?"—"She had not read it; she had been reading one lent to her by Mr. Harvey."—"Oh! that alone was a recommendation!"

But he suddenly changed his tone.—

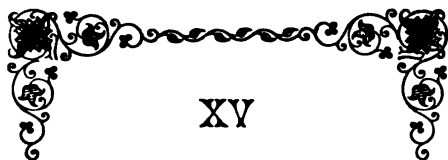
"Helen, I think you are beginning to like that Mr. Harvey very much!—or, is it only a love of admiration?"

"You have no right to ask."

"Can you, then, so utterly cast aside the friendship of years, as to tell me that 'I have no right to ask' such a question of you, who have till lately treated me as a brother?—Oh, Helen!"

But she could not forget her mother's manoeuvre. Her pride revolted at the idea of trying to "catch" John. She made no answer; and soon afterwards she was laughing and talking in the most animated manner with Mr. Harvey.

John's brow darkened. And that was the beginning of an estrangement which lasted for six months.



XV

THE SETTLE.

THAT was a weary time to Helen. John seldom called; and when he did so, his visit was evidently intended for Mrs. Grey only, and he scarcely noticed Helen, who, too proud (or rather too *cowardly*) to make the first acknowledgment of error, suffered acutely, and in silence. They met at one or two little "tea-drinkings," and there John's manner was the same; and, to complete Helen's discomfiture, the curate generally devoted his attention to the obnoxious Louisa Thomson; so that Helen was thrown upon the mercy of Mr. Masters; the bald old gentleman having turned over his attention to Mrs. Grey. How Helen hated those tea-meetings! to which she went, solely lest John should think she could not bear to meet his altered looks. Her mother noticed the change, with great uneasiness, and questioned Helen, but received evasive answers. Poor Marty half guessed the truth; and testified her sympathy by acts of humble devotion, and by an anxious, yearning tenderness of manner, which Helen, with the waywardness of a spoilt child, frequently repudiated. Thus, six months passed.

One evening, in the end of April, Mrs. Grey went to tea at Mrs. Howard's. Helen resolutely refused to go, despite the united entreaties of her mother and the good Marty.

"Now, really Helen," said Mrs. Grey in tone of slight displeasure, "you are acting ungratefully towards the Howards. I see that you and John have had some quarrel, but that should not influence you so far as to make you avoid his

kind mother—who has always been so good to you—and Lucy, your dearest friend!”

“Give my love to Lucy, mamma; and ask her to come here to-morrow evening.”

“Helen, *do go!*” pleaded her mother, very earnestly.

“Now, *do’ee!*” said Marty.

Helen wavered. Mrs. Grey thought to improve her advantage, by adding,—

“And I will just tell you what I think, Helen!—You are giving John the idea that you are very ill-tempered—I can see that he thinks so! It will be your own fault if he turn over his liking to that vapid Louisa Thomson, whose one good quality is her fine temper. You will not have the chance of so good a match again, I can tell you!”

Helen’s eyes flashed.—

“Let him marry her!—I don’t care! I don’t want to be married! He says I am a child;—and that’s what he considers me! I *won’t* be married!—at least, not to him!”

Marty burst out crying, and ran from the room. Mrs. Grey sighed, and went to put on her bonnet; then, summoning the page to attend her, she sallied forth.

“Helen not with you?” exclaimed Mrs. Howard and Lucy in a breath.

“No, poor child! she begged to be excused. I cannot imagine what has come to her of late! She is suffering from the most terrible depression of spirits, and will not tell me the cause.”

“Has the parson anything to do with it?” asked John, with an attempt at gaiety. “She was, I know, an enthusiastic admirer of his.”

“Oh, dear no! you are quite mistaken! She laughs at him—ridicules his every look and gesture!”

“Ah! that may be from pique,” said John.

“No, no; I am sure she does not like *him!*” said Mrs. Grey, laying a peculiar stress on the pronoun.

“Then who is it?” he asked. “Is it Masters?”

“Dear me, no!—But I should not have said so much. Excuse me—Helen would be dreadfully annoyed if she thought we had discussed the subject. I have no reason to suppose there is *anyone* in the case. Why should there be?”

After tea, John quietly left the room, and walked out of the house.

As soon as Helen was alone, she went in to the kitchen, to have a talk with Marty, and sat down in the settle with a book in her lap.

"Marty, dear," she began, after a long fit of thought, "don't take it unkindly—will you?—when I am cross and ungrateful. I love you Marty, through it all. Don't I?"

Marty flung herself down on her knees before her young mistress, and passionately kissed her hands.

"Dear, good Marty! You are the best friend I ever had! —the best and dearest!"

After a pause she added,—

"I wish I were more like you, Marty!"

"Oh! my precious lamb! you don't mean that! you wouldn't like to be ugly, and awkward, and stupid, and vulgar?"

"Yes I would Marty, to be as good and happy as you! But you are *not* ugly, nor stupid, nor awkward, nor vulgar—no, that you are not!—Vulgar?—not half so vulgar as I am, when I am ashamed to speak to people ten thousand times better than myself, only because they are badly dressed, or in a lower position than my own!—Not half so vulgar, nor so *mean*, as when I work and scheme for days before going to a party, and furbish up dirty old bits of lace and ribbon that won't bear the day-light, so that I may appear better dressed than those who are ten times as rich as I am! Not half so vulgar, and mean, and cowardly, as when I allow people to think I am very well off—and talk as if I were,—while I am decked in all the miserable contrivances to conceal my poverty!"

"Don't talk like that! I can't bear to hear it!" sobbed Marty. "As if I didn't know that you do all that to please missis! It's her fault, all along!"

"Hush Marty! Not a word against mamma, or I shall be very angry with you! Don't you know that mamma is the most unselfish person in the world, and that her one thought is to promote my welfare?"

"Well, and ain't you'n to please her?"

"No Marty—not entirely. I like to be thought better off

than I am! And I like rich people better than poor ones, and grand houses better than simple ones. I feel it all growing upon me Marty;—it's my nature!"

"No, it ain't," said Marty. "But you'll be wanting your tea now, my dear; I'll take it into the parlour."

"No thank you, Marty; I am very comfortable here. Just give me some tea out of your tea-pot, as it is ready."

"And here's a nice cake I've made for you, my precious;—just wait till I've buttered it. There—now you're all right!"

"You sit down, too, Marty."

"No, Miss, I know my place better!—A servant shouldn't sit down to table with her missis!"

"But you are my *friend*, Marty!"

"Never mind, Miss;—I ain't a'goin' to do no such a thing!"

And Marty, taking up her work, sat down by the fire.

"There!" said Helen, when she had finished her tea, "that has done me good! The cake was delicious, Marty! And now, I feel in a better temper—I was very cross just now. I wish we had a settle in the parlour!—but mamma would think it vulgar. How nice it would be, if there were no such thing as vulgarity!"

So saying, she ensconced herself in the settle, with her book in her lap.

"So, Tom," she said, addressing an individual who has not yet been introduced to the reader, "So Tom, you want to be nursed. Jump up then!"

"Tom" was a large yellow cat, the property of Marty, and treasured in her heart next only to her young mistress (and, *perhaps*, one other person!) Three years before, Marty had saved poor Tom from a watery grave, and had installed him in his present domicile, *malgré* all the remonstrances of Mrs. Grey, who pronounced him a cat of most vulgar appearance, and even went so far as to hold out to Marty a promise of a canary, if she would discard her feline favorite.

"No, Mum," said Marty; "I've put up with a deal from you; but I won't part with Tom! The cretur took kind to me from the first, and him and me has got to be friends; so, if he goes, I go!"

Marty had no intention of carrying out her threat; but it had due weight with Mrs. Grey, who knew, though she would

not confess, Marty's value. So Tom was suffered to remain. Poor Tom! he was no beauty; for not only was his colour objectionable, but he had lost one ear, and two joints of his tail; and a large patch of hair had been scalded from his back. Yet Tom, like his mistress, was a diamond in the rough, and had sterling good qualities that more than compensated for his want of personal attractions. He had a serene temper, which nothing had been ever known to ruffle, and a most grateful, affectionate heart. He was also gifted with the most spotless integrity of character; his principles having been known to stand even the severe test of a delicious roast pheasant, inadvertently left on the kitchen table, in company with Tom!

"Look, what a dear, affectionate thing it is!" said Helen, as Tom made a dive with his nose against the corner of her back, and ran it into his eye. "I wish all the world were as good as you and Marty, Tom!"

Tom rolled over on his back, and looked unutterable things out of his yellow eyes.

"There, lie down, good old fellow; and let me read."

Tom settled himself with his head on her arm, and struck up a loud purr, working his claws in and out of her dress.

"Miss Helen," said Marty, while washing the tea-things, "I'd like to tell you a dream I had last night. I dreamt that I was in the gallery at church, lookin' down below; and a weddin' party came in—all dressed so fine! And the bride was dressed the finest of all; and she had a long veil, reaching to her feet, made all of silver and gold; and she was covered with dimonds from head to foot!"

Helen burst out laughing.

"Don't laugh, my dear;—you don't know what's comin'!—Well, I thought she lifted her veil, and looked up at me;—and 'twas *you*, my dear, was the bride!"

"And who was the bridegroom, Marty?" asked Helen, with interest.

"Why, the bridegroom was Mr.—— Now, guess!"

"Tell me, Marty."

"Mr. Harvey!"

"Nonsense, Marty!" Helen impatiently interrupted. "I wonder you have not more sense, than to be relating your silly

dreams! Nothing is a greater mark of a vulgar and superstitious mind! You had been thinking of Mr. Harvey and of me; and that made you dream about it."

"Well, so I had.—But you haven't heard all! I looked hard at Mr. Harvey; and I thought he changed like, and seemed to grow more tall and grand; and then I found I'd made a mistake, and 'twas Mr. John—not Mr. Harvey—was the bridegroom!"

"Dear old Marty! How cross I was! I am very sorry!" cried Helen, springing up, and giving her a hearty kiss. "And the dream was a very good one, and very cleverly told. I was wrong in saying it is vulgar to talk about dreams; for some of the cleverest men have written about them. Poor old Tom! jump up again. I didn't mean to disturb you!"

"There's the bell!" cried Marty, running out to the door.

Before the step sounded again in the kitchen, Helen had fallen into a reverie, of which the result was the following soliloquy:—

"Yes Tom!—you and Marty are worth your weight in gold. I wish I were as good!" She heaved a sigh. "Oh! if there were no such thing as money, or fashion, or vulgarity, how nice it would be! How pleasant, to be natural!—to say to every one just what one feels, without any fear of misconstruction!—wouldn't it Marty?" she asked, without looking up, for she heard a footstep close to her.

"Very pleasant, indeed, Helen," said John (for it was he), taking her hand, and sitting down beside her; "and I see no earthly reason why you should not indulge that pleasure for this one evening, at least. To begin, confess that you are at this moment less glad to see me, than annoyed at my finding you in a morning dress, with your hair in disarray. Come, be candid!"

For a moment, she was undecided whether to be offended or not. Then it occurred to her, how absurd it would be to look dignified in the kitchen settle, with old Tom in her lap. She looked up in John's face, caught the merry twinkle in his eye, and gave way to a hearty fit of laughter.

"Now, I know full well," he said, "that I should not have been so well received if I had found you in the parlour, with your hair neat, and with your evening dress on,—eh?"

"Perhaps not." And again she laughed.

"Then, bless the kitchen, and the settle too!" said John, with hearty emphasis. "No, don't move; this is far more comfortable than the parlour."

"Mamma would be horrified, if she knew you had found me here!"

"Never mind. Mamma need not know anything about it. Besides, I came to see *you*. I think we have quarrelled long enough, don't you?"

"Ye—es."

"Umph!—a rather doubtful assent, Helen! But I know you mean more than you say. However, we won't discuss that now. I have a piece of news for you.—Louisa Thomson is engaged to Harvey, and will soon be married."

How narrowly he watched for the effect of this communication.

"Oh! how glad I am!"

There was no mistaking the joy that filled her heart. She *was* glad; as, in truth, she would have been, had she heard that Louisa was about to contract an alliance matrimonial with His Satanic Highness himself; for she had regarded Louisa as her rival with John. So she said,—

"How glad I am!"

John was satisfied. After a pause, he added,—

"And I have another piece of news for you—though that will not interest you so much.—I am going away for a time."

"Oh! no, no! don't go away John!—don't!"

Her voice trembled; and she turned away her head, to conceal her tears; but John bent forward, and, in the light of the fire, detected those evidences of feeling.

"Helen, you would be sorry for me to go away, then?"

But her mood suddenly changed. She replied,—

"Yes—that is, pretty well. I mean—you won't be here as a partner, in case of dances, or——"

It had suddenly occurred to her to connect Louisa's acceptance of Mr. Harvey, with John's departure; and she felt disappointed and annoyed.

"Helen, you veer about like a weather-cock! Now, what have I said or done, to warrant so unkind a speech? I don't believe you were in earnest; for you would be the coldest-hearted girl breathing, if you felt no more regret at my de-

parture than you have just expressed. Do you know—can you guess—why I am going away?”

“Yes,” she answered, very coldly.

“‘Yes!’ and can you acknowledge it in this calm, self-possessed manner?”

“Why should I not be calm and self-possessed, when I speak of your liking for her?”

“For whom?”

“Louisa.”

“For Louisa? Oh Helen! you will kill me! I never heard anything so good! For Louisa?—you little simpleton!—I never had a thought for her, beyond what I bestow on every pink-faced bread-and-butter-looking damsel that comes in my way!”

“John, are you sure? Lean forward into the fire-light, and let me read whether you are in earnest.”

“Yes,” thought John; “but *two* can play at that game, Helen!” And he read in her face, that she was unfeignedly delighted. After a while he said,—

“Then I need not go away, I suppose?”

There was no answer, beyond a very expressive blush and dimple. Again silence ensued, which he at last broke by saying,—

“—To think of my making you an offer in the kitchen settle; and of your accepting me!”

He said this with a furtive, half-doubting glance; and seemed to expect an answer.

“An offer? An — Oh, John!”

“Yes, I have, indeed!”

“And have I accepted you?”

“Yes, of course you have!”

Helen mused, and blushed deeply. She felt very happy, but as bewildered as happy. Extreme astonishment had taken possession of her. John spoke:—

“Well, little dreamer—what are you thinking of?”

“It seems so strange!—I never had an offer before! Is that the way they are always made, John?”

“What—in kitchen settles? No. If you consult a fashionable novel, you will generally find that the lady is seated ‘on a gilded couch, in an elegantly-furnished drawing-room—’(or boudoir.) ‘Rare exotics’ are around her, ‘perfuming the air

with their balmy fragrance.' A lap-dog called, 'Mini,' or 'Nini,' or some other 'i,' is snoring on a crimson-velvet cushion at her feet. A bullfinch whistles a plaintive air from between the bars of his 'gilded prison;'—etc.,—etc.,—etc. Shall I go on?"

"No, thank you. I prefer the settle. But John," she continued, after another fit of thought, "if I really am engaged to you,—"

"Don't say 'if;'—of course you are!"

"Well, then,—I don't want you to think that—that— I want you to understand what has made me so cross and unreasonable."

"Yes; I should like to know."

"Well, first of all it was because you treated me like a child, and Louisa Thomson like a grown-up woman; and I thought you liked her better than me."

"Very well; go on."

"Then, mamma liked you so much, that she could not bear to see me quarrel with you; and once or twice she drew you away from Louisa, that you might be with me. That annoyed me; partly because I would rather you had come of your own accord, partly because I thought it wrong to draw you away from Louisa, if you liked her, and she you."

"Say no more, Helen; I am quite satisfied—quite convinced. Now, promise me one thing: Don't let any further misunderstanding arise between us. The moment you feel a doubt—the least doubt—tell me!"

"I will, indeed."

"Dear Helen, how fortunate it was that I yielded to the impulse which came over me when your mamma said you were unhappy! And are you quite sure that you would not prefer a younger, handsomer, more clever fellow than I am?"

His voice was very tremulous; and he gazed searchingly in her face.

"Oh, John! I have always thought you the handsomest, and most clever, and——"

She was turning away, in confusion at her involuntary confession; but John gently drew her towards him, and laid her blushing cheek on his shoulder.

After awhile Mrs. Grey returned home.

"Missis! Missis!" exclaimed Marty, in tones of mysterious

rapture, "he's there!" and she levelled her finger (as though it were a gun, and she were taking aim with it) in the direction of the kitchen. "He's *there*, Missis! And I'm sure he's a'askin' of her to keep company!"

"Who?—What?—Where?" gasped Mrs. Grey, in utter bewilderment.

"Mr. John, Mum; he's in the kitchen, a'maki-' love to Miss Helen!"

"'Making love!' you vulgar creature! Nonsense! it's no such thing!—The *kitchen*? Why was he shown in there?—I shall faint!"

"No, Mum; don't'ee do that please!—not till you've seen 'em there!"

And Marty drew Mrs. Grey inside the kitchen door.

She saw! It was enough! John had evidently proposed for Helen!

Back went Marty and Mrs. Grey into the parlour.

"Marty, you have proved yourself to be a person of discretion,—which means, sense—judgment—tact. An indiscreet person would have remained in the kitchen, and have spoilt all. Marty, you are to be trusted! I esteem you Marty, and—and value your services!"

"Thank you, Mum," said Marty, dropping an involuntary curtsy at the first complimentary speech ever addressed to her by Mrs. Grey.

But her mistress did not rest there. She went to her room, and, returning, presented Marty with a cap-ribbon, as a token of her approval.

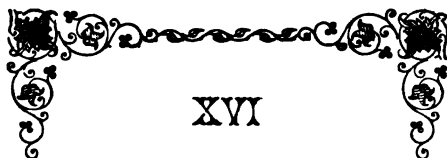
"There, Marty, good girl—take it!" she said, in the same tone in which the affectionate father on the stage says to the young gentleman who is going to lead his daughter to a garret and starvation, "Take her, sir—she is my all! Treat her kindly!" etc.

John and Helen sat hand in hand, earless Tom purring at their feet; while the kettle, and a convivial cricket, joined in a social duet. At last John rose to depart.

"Good-night, dear. I shall go out the back way. Your mamma will be coming in soon; and I don't feel inclined to see a single soul to-night—I'm too happy!"

He walked towards the door, and then returned for a last good-night.

"Bless you—you little darling!"



HAPPINESS.

"HELEN," said John, a few days later, "have you well reflected on the consequences of the step you are now taking?"

"No John, I have not reflected at all. But I know that I am very happy."

He continued:—"I have been so accustomed to laugh and joke with you, and to treat you as a child, that I fear I did not speak seriously enough to you the other night. I must do so now, Helen."

She clasped her little hands round his arm, and looked wistfully in his face.

"My dear," he said, "I want you to consider what you are doing. Remember that I am an old man"—(she laughed; so did he)—"yes, an old man—compared with you; and that my tastes and habits are all domestic, and my notions, you may think, old-fashioned—"

"No, no!" she interrupted.

He went on:—"You, Helen, are fond of gaiety and excitement, and (forgive me!) of admiration—"

"No, indeed, John. I don't care for any admiration but yours!"

What wonder, if, for a few moments, he forgot his grave purpose? But at last he resumed:—

"If you are not *quite* sure that you will never regret having chosen me—if you are not *quite* sure that you will not one day think you might have made a brilliant marriage—tell me so at once; and we will part, my dear, while I have strength to give you up."

"Don't, John—please;—don't talk in that way! I can't tell you—I can only *feel*—how much better you are than myself! how unworthy I am to be your wife! But, oh! I will try hard to correct my faults! Will you help me, John? I can bear to be told of them, now that I know you don't find fault with me from the love of finding fault."

"Do you really mean it? And will you not be offended with me, if I correct you when I think you are in the wrong?"

"Offended? No! I can never again be offended with you, John—never! And I shall feel grateful to you for taking so kind an interest in me, as to tell me of my faults. Now, which is the worst of them?"

He hesitated to reply.—

"I don't know; but I will name those which have more especially struck me.—A worldly disposition—an ungovernable temper—a jealous, envious heart—"

"Oh! stop—stop!" cried Helen. "If you see such terrible faults in me, how can you love me?"

"My dear, those very faults are so blended with a noble generosity, a frank admission of unworthiness, and a deep sense of something better than the objects and pursuits which have hitherto engrossed your thoughts; that I mentally compare your disposition to a beautiful garden, overrun by weeds and brambles; and I long to root them out, that I may admire the beauty of the sweet flowers they conceal."

"Your task is no easy one, John; but, if anyone can do me good, you can!"

"There—I can't lecture you any more, little siren! I wish (*almost*) that you would fall into one of your perverse moods, so that I might find it possible to do my duty by you!"

"That is, to scold me?"

"Yes, you torment!"

And thus, in general, ended John's lectures.

Those were very happy days. Often, in after years, when the clouds of affliction were heaped, mountain high, over her head, did she look back to that peaceful time, and wish that she had then died, with the good influence in her heart, shedding its mellow light over her young days. And, he too, how he thought, years after, with sighs and groans of anguish, upon that time;—thought of it, through winter and summer,

through toil and rest,—thought of it—do what he would—always—always! The walks in the pleasant fields—the rambles in the lane—the long talks beside the bubbling well. The elm-tree, beneath which they sat in the evening;—the cawing of the rooks over-head; the pleasant rustling of the branches. The sun-set, as the great orb went down behind the trees; the chilly breeze that came rustling past them, and made him draw the mantle yet more closely around her, his arm lingering ere it was withdrawn. Then the moon would appear, in her cold and radiant purity; and the stars peeped forth, one by one, twinkling down upon them from their deep blue vault above. Then John would rise, and draw Helen within doors, where Mrs. Howard and Lucy sat, forbearing to disturb them. And Helen would advance shyly towards John's mother, and would kiss her, and relate to her some little incident, with a childish simplicity of manner that was growing upon her. Then tea, (which had only awaited the entrance of the lovers) was poured out; and when it was over, Mrs. Howard, and Lucy, and Helen, worked, while John, seated beside Helen, read aloud. Now and then, the mother laid aside her work, and gazed, with dewy eyes, upon the pair;—with tearful eyes, and proud admiring love, on John, her son, her hero, with his noble brow and kindling glance;—on Helen, with her girlish look, and dark eyes, so softly gleaming from beneath their long lashes.

Was not this happiness?



MRS. HUNTINGDON'S LETTER.

MARTY was in ecstasies with the engagement. For weeks, she could think of nothing else; and her disordered thoughts expressed themselves in a string of sentences which often brought down upon her a charge of Lindley Murray's heavy dragoons. But Marty's enthusiasm was proof against even Lindley Murray; and not all Mrs. Grey's candid assurances of Marty's being the most vulgar-minded woman on earth, availed to check it. Mrs. Grey's exultation, though less open, was quite equal to Marty's. The following is a fair sample of the thoughts which, at that time, passed through her mind in inextricable confusion:—

“The two hundred a-year all to myself! A pony-carriage, with James to drive! Marty shall go!—A French maid! Who shall come to the wedding?—A Honiton veil! White silk, or satin?—Two waiters from Hapsley!—Something extra from old Stub for the occasion!—All the county society!—Cut the Brockley people!—White or pink gloves?—A pink brocade or a peach?—Pigeon pies—Chicken—Cold game—”

Here the ruminations generally became too complicated to be continued.

Mrs. Grey lectured her daughter incessantly, for not being more sensible of the grandeur of her position.

“Don't you see, my dear, that we shall take quite a different standing in the county? Don't you see, that we shall at last be able to cut all the vulgarians of Brockley?”

“I don't see why we should, mamma.”

•

"Helen, you are quite blind to the advantages of your position ; and, I must say, ungrateful to me for my efforts to secure it for you !"

"No, dear mamma—no!" exclaimed Helen, throwing her arms round her mother's neck ; "but I am so happy to think, that John loves me, that I can't think of anything else !"

"What! not even of the pride and exultation with which you will descend with him from the brougham—*Aprapos*, there is to be a brougham?—"

"I believe so. Yes, mamma, I *should* like John to hand me out of a brougham—(*my* brougham!)—at the church-door on Sunday, while Louisa Thomson came walking through the mud with her Curate! She would not exult then, at having taken him from me ;—not that she did, though, for I thought him odious!"

Mrs. Howard watched with pleasure, and yet with anxiety, the engagement of the young pair ; for though she saw that Helen had a warm, impulsive, generous nature, she feared that her impulses were not governed by the one sole restraining power. For the love of man, she would do much ;—for the love of God, she had never been taught to do anything. John, too, though he had a deep respect for religion, regarded it with his reason rather than with his heart. He was too *proud*, to be a sincere Christian.

"My dear son," his mother said to him, "you are, both of you, wanting in that humility which is the commencement of true religion. I trust—I pray—that you may attain it without the aid of those crushing trials which God so often sends to the proud in heart ;—sends, in mercy—in mercy, my dear child! Alas! I fear for you both!"

John smiled quietly, and kissed his mother. He was not convinced, however. John acted up to most of the precepts of the Christian religion—most, but not all. He read his Bible—he worshipped God—he gave to the poor—he felt acutely for their distresses ;—he was a good son—a kind brother. But, with his equals, he wanted humility ; he could not forgive their offences, and was unwilling to receive favors from them. The great blemish in his character was pride, and there was little chance of his conquering the fault, for he would not acknowledge its existence ; he called it "self-respect"—"a sense of what was due to him as a man."

A sense of what is due!—If we all had a *deeper* sense of our deserts, there would be no such thing as pride! If we all felt that we are wretched, grovelling worms, bound down to the earth by the heavy, loathsome weight of our sins, we should be less prone to talk of what is *due* to us from our fellow-creatures. I have often thought,—supposing it were possible for our mental part to become as visible as our corporeal members;—if our selfishness, our vanity, our treachery, our hatred, our suspicion and jealousy, and all the meannesses of our nature, were embodied, and visible to each other's physical sight; how each of us would shrink, in loathing and dread, from the other. There would then be no more talk of "what is due to ourselves!" And why can't we remember this? Why not rather take shame to ourselves for receiving, as though we deserved it, the commendation of those who cannot read our hearts—who judge us by our *words* and *actions*, instead of by our motives!

But John thought not of this, and only laughed at his mother's forebodings; thinking within himself, that she was a dear, kind woman; and loving her all the more for that which he considered her feminine weakness. Mrs. Howard saw, with pleasure, that his present happiness was doing more to render him yielding and gentle, than all her admonitions had been able to effect; and that Helen, under his influence, was gradually discarding those worldly notions which it had been her mother's aim to render part of her nature.

Thus passed two months of such happiness as they had never before known;—pure, tranquil, enjoyment.

"My dearest child," said Mrs. Grey, "I fear you are not sufficiently devoted to Mr. John."

"How, mamma?" she asked, in amazement.

"Why, you know love, it is a most excellent match for you—far beyond what you had any right to expect! At one time I thought it would be a good thing for you to marry even Mr. Masters!"

An impatient gesture from Helen, whose face flushed up to the temples.

"But I was going to say, love, that I do not think you are duly sensible of the great advantage of marrying into such a good family—"

"I don't care for the advantages!—I care for John himself—not for his position; and I love Mrs. Howard and Lucy because they are good, and love me!"

"Quite right, and very proper, my dear. Your sentiments, though somewhat utopian, are very pretty, and suitable to your age."—(Helen couldn't bear to be thought young!)"—"But I meant to observe, that I don't think you show how much you feel flattered by his attention. Yesterday, when he asked you to go for a walk, you said you were too tired to go out—"

"So I was, mamma; for I had been gardening, and was quite stiff with fatigue."

"And to-day, you have refused to spend the evening with the Howards, because you had previously accepted an invitation to the Lewises."

"Certainly, mamma; and Mrs. Howard would not wish me to do otherwise. In accepting John's offer, I have given the best proof of my affection; and he knows it. He knows that I would rather starve, with him, than live in splendour with anyone else!"

"Ah! that would be foolish, my dear! Starvation is a very uncomfortable feeling; and I should decidedly set my face against anything of the sort!"

They were here interrupted by the arrival of the postman, with a letter for Mrs. Grey.

"Dear me! who *can* this be from?" she said, opening it, and glancing at the name at the end. 'Letitia Huntingdon!' "I don't know—yes I do!—Dear me!—very nice and affable, in her, to write to me!—Quite flattering!"

The letter ran as follows:—

"MY DEAREST FRIEND,—The veil of absence and of years has so long interposed its chilling influence, that I fear I may have some difficulty in recalling to your memory her who was once the chosen confidante of your most secret thoughts! Perchance, the world—the hollow heartless world—may have imbued you with its fatal principles, and have rendered you callous to this appeal from your old friend and playmate—Letitia. But no,—I feel that the mere supposition were a libel on the generous, impulsive nature of my sweet friend,—a nature, which no amount of years or absence could cor

rupt! Forgive me, my Maria, if my feelings will have way!—your own heart will find its excuse for the gushings forth of mine!

"But I must, for a short time, recall my thoughts from the cherished regions of the past, and explain briefly what has been my career since we parted.—Fate allotted us different paths in life. You, my charming friend, married the man of your choice, and, cheerfully surrendering the chance of a more brilliant destiny, retired into humble seclusion, blessed with the treasure of his love; while I, though my own feelings would have led me to embrace a similar lot, yielded to my fate and became the wealthy Lady of Staniswood. I lost sight of you—(Ah! why, my friend, did you allow me to do so?) My husband died. Then, my Maria, I felt alone—alone! For, what comfort could I derive from the pretended sympathy and friendship of those, who worship my wealth and position, but do not love me for myself! I looked back with tender regret, upon the time when I possessed the treasure of my Maria's unworldly love. I resolved to seek you out. After much trouble, I have done so, and have ascertained that you also have been bereft of your adored husband, and are alone. Write to me, my dearest friend; tell me if your heart echoes to the throbbings of mine; and say whether I may at once fly to the shelter of your hospitable roof, and bury my sorrows and joys in the bosom of my early friend.

"Your devoted

"LETITIA HUNTINGDON."

"P.S.—I should like to spend a month with you, if quite convenient to you."

The "early friend" read this letter once—twice—thrice; then, an expression of blank dismay stole over her countenance.

"Was ever anything so unfortunate?"

"What, mamma?"

"Read, my dear."

She did so, and then asked,—

"Why 'unfortunate'?—I'm sure I should be glad, if an old friend wrote me such a letter!"

"But consider, my dear!—This woman will want eggs for her breakfast, and muffins—think of that!—muffins, at a penny a piece!—and ham! and I don't know what besides!"

"Well mamma, let us stint ourselves in something. She would do the same for us, if she were in our place!"

"I don't know that, my dear! At all events, I don't see that we are called upon to make any sacrifices for this Mrs. Huntingdon. What has she ever done for us?"

"Suppose other people were to apply that rule to you and me mamma;—what would become of us?"

"Nonsense, Helen—that is quite a different thing! We are poor, and therefore cannot afford to be generous!"

"But we can afford to be commonly kind and hospitable."

"You are wandering from the question, Helen."

"Well, mamma, I do think you ought to have Mrs. Huntingdon here. She is a rich lady, and is paying you a great compliment in wishing to leave her luxurious mansion for this little cottage."

"True, my dear—true," Mrs. Grey replied, in a musing tone of voice. She had fallen upon a train of ideas. "—And no doubt Mrs. Huntingdon dresses magnificently, and has *l'air distingué*, and would be a creditable person to present to the Brockleyites."

"Yes, mamma," replied Helen, while a faint blush stole over her cheek; "and I should like the Howards to see so favorable a specimen of our acquaintances. I should like John to know, that we are not so inferior in point of standing, as we must seem to be."

An unworthy thought of Helen's!

"Yes, of course, my dear.—But I do wish the woman would have left us alone!"

Whereupon, Mrs. Grey sat down, to concoct the following epistle to Mrs. Huntingdon:—

"MY CHARMING FRIEND,—Your dear dear missive has enchanted me beyond expression. Often—how often!—have I thought of the days that are past, and longed—yearned—to behold once more the face of my early friend. If you do not dread the thought of spending a month in my humble cottage (would that you had said a *year*!) come, and we will try, by the most devoted affection and solicitude, to supply the place of those comforts, to which, in your splendid mansion, you have been accustomed, but which, alas! I have no means of providing." ("That will do!" thought Mrs. Grey. "She won't

expect ham for breakfast!") "You do not seem to be aware that my adored William left me one sweet pledge of our love—my daughter, Helen; who begs that I will convey to her mamma's idolised friend, her most devoted love.

"And now, believe me to remain,

"My sweetest Letitia,

"Your ever constant and faithful friend,

"MARIA GREY."

Mrs. Grey's note had warmed up by degrees; Helen having suggested, that she would, perhaps, bring her carriage with her;—and would not that be a triumph over the Brookleyites?

When this epistle (which Mrs. Grey did not think proper to show her daughter) was perused by the "sweetest Letitia," that lady calmly observed,—

"The same fool as ever! Success is certain!"

And then she sat down, to indite a loving reply to her "dearest Maria," appointing that day week for the commencement of her visit. To this announcement Mrs. Grey returned a delighted answer, adding, in a postscript,—

"I am in despair, at having no carriage! I fear you will miss that most delightful of luxuries. How *will* you be able to do without one?"

"There Helen, that's a hint! Will she take it, do you think?"

"I should think so, mamma. I hope she is not fond of walking."

"Don't you think, love, it would be well to mention the muddy roads?"

"I'm afraid not, mamma. The hint would be too palpable. Besides, she will most likely travel in her own carriage."

"And to think of that dreadful Marty, Helen!—She is sure to disgrace us!"

"Poor Marty!" said Helen, "I know she will do her best; and she shall go through all the examples this week."

"Yes, my dear—see that she does." After a pause, she added,—"I do wish Mrs. Huntingdon had come and gone! It will be so dreadfully expensive, trying to keep up appearances?"

"Wouldn't it be better *not* to try, mamma?—to confess at once, that we are very poor?"

"No my dear, I think not.—Yet I dread the expense. We shall have to ask the Howards to dinner—"

"No, ask them to tea, mamma;—it will be far cheaper. Have muffins, and cake, and fancy-biscuits, and thin bread-and-butter, and jam, for tea; and have sandwiches, and pat-ties, and wine, for supper."

"A good idea, Helen. Well then, I must give a little party."

"Oh! dear no, mamma! we can never afford it!"

"Yes we can love, if we put on the screw (dear me! what a vulgar expression!) afterwards. To confess the truth, I should like to show off Mrs. Huntingdon to the Thomsons and Lewises. Besides, I don't like those people to fancy we are in their debt, and can't afford to ask them back!"

"But, mamma, they have been asking us for years!—*one* party would not pay them off!"

"But, dearest, that one party should be given in such style, that it would eclipse all their miserable little attempts!"

Helen began to yield. She thought she should like the Howards to come to a party of theirs. Besides, she wanted the grand Mrs. Huntingdon to see John in his dress-clothes.



XVIII

MRS. HUNTINGDON.

"WELL, for my part," said John, "I'm sorry this Mrs. Huntingdon is coming. I shall not see half so much of you, my dear, when she is with you."

"But indeed you will, John. We can take our walks, just the same. Mrs. Huntingdon will be mamma's companion—not mine."

"Still, I wish she were not coming," he said, "I know we shall not go on in the same quiet happy way as before."

"Yes we shall, John; if I thought otherwise, I should dread her visit."

At last the day arrived. Mrs. Grey and Helen had been in a flutter of anxiety all the morning; and now, they were seated in the parlour—henceforth to be called the "drawing-room"—awaiting the arrival of the guest.

"I hope she won't think that we have hitherto lived in one room, Helen; I can't see why she should."

"No, mamma, of course not."

"And the store-room really makes a very good dining-room; and the old carpet does not look at all amiss."

"Certainly not, mamma."

"I hope, though," Mrs. Grey continued, "Marty will not forget, and call it 'the store room!'—And are you quite sure that she understands she is to call the page 'James'—instead of 'Jim'?"

"Yes, mamma; she has called him so all day."

"The gall has improved this carpet wonderfully, my dear;

it is as good as new. And I don't think she will guess that the table-cloth was once a shawl?"

"Oh, dear no, mamma! It looks exactly like a table-cloth!"

"And I don't think the muslin curtains look cheap, do they love?"

"No, mamma; they were certainly a great bargain."

"Ah! that was because they were soiled,—no disadvantage at all;—it is so vulgar, to have everything looking bran-new!"

Mrs. Grey might rest assured that the curtains in question would never come under so sweeping a denunciation; for, in addition to their presenting the appearance of having been washed in coffee grounds, they were tessellated with sundry holes and punctures, which, however, the frugal Marty had done her best to render invisible.

"There she comes!" cried Mrs. Grey, as the roll of approaching wheels fell upon her ear; and, soon after, a handsome carriage, drawn by post-horses, drew up to the door.

"Helen, catch up your embroidery;—it looks more *degagé*!" cried Mrs. Grey, herself clutching at some Berlin wool. "Don't run into the passage child! Let her think we are used to this sort of thing!"

James threw open the door, and announced:—

"Mrs. Untingdon!"

(All the Jameses were alike afflicted with an utter incapacity for pronouncing "poor letter H.")

The next moment, the two friends were clasped in each other's arms.

"My dearest Letitia!"

"My sweet Maria!"

The "dearest," and the "sweet," sat down together on the sofa, and "took a sight" (*mentally*, of course!) at each other. Mrs. Huntingdon's idea was,—"*What a little, mincing affected, vulgar, shabbily-dressed woman!*" Mrs. Grey's was,—"*What a magnificent brocade! What a splendid mantle! What an angelic bonnet! How her gloves fit! What exquisite lace and trimmings! Why on earth doesn't she marry again? — For she is still good-looking, though *passée*.*"

"Dearest Maria, you are the same charming, unaffected creature that you used to be!"

"And you—sweet friend," replied Mrs. Grey—"you are but changed for the better!"

"And is this dear, fresh, delightful creature, your daughter? I must kiss her—I really must! Excuse me, my love!—I feel already that I shall adore you!—Till you wrote," she added, turning to Mrs. Grey, "I did not know you possessed such a treasure!"

(Dear me! didn't you, Mrs. Huntingdon? Then what Miss Helen Grey was it, that formed the subject of a very interesting conversation between you and another person, one day last month?)

"Ah! how forgetful I am!" Mrs. Grey resumed. "You have brought your carriage;—and I have no coach-house!"

"Pray don't mention it—there is one in the village. I heard your footman—'Jim,' I think your maid called him—tell the postillion so."

Mrs. Grey's feelings were mingled. Marty had not only, contrary to orders, shewn herself to Mrs. Huntingdon, but had, in the excitement of the moment, called James, "Jim." However, the experiment of a tailed coat, and very high-heeled boots, had, she fondly hoped, deceived Mrs. Huntingdon into the belief that she kept a footman!

Mrs. Huntingdon continued:—

"My coachman will follow with the horses. I always travel in my own carriage; and, as you seemed so much to regret not being able to drive me about (though really I shall quite enjoy walking in this beautiful country), I thought the horses might as well be here as elsewhere."

"The roads are terribly muddy!" exclaimed Mrs. Grey; "and I am sure you could never walk in them."

"Ah! you mistake, my dear friend. I am quite a child of Nature—quite!"

If so, Nature was a most unnatural mother to her child; for she left her entirely to the charge of her step-father, Art, for whom, to tell the truth, Mrs. Huntingdon bore a wonderful affection.



MRS. GREY GIVES A PARTY.

Mrs. HUNTINGDON and Mrs. Howard did not assimilate in the least. The former tried to be very agreeable to the latter; but, amidst her smiles and honied words, there was a latent touch of sarcasm, which Mrs. Howard, with her intuitive quickness, detected at once, and responded to with dignified coldness.

The evening after Mrs. Huntingdon's arrival, the Howards came to tea. Mrs. Grey had not mentioned Helen's engagement; and Mrs. Huntingdon pronounced John to be "a very agreeable, good-looking man, with a decided air of good-breeding." No sooner, however, had she learnt the truth, than she appeared to change her mind, and, a few days after, ventured so far as to say to her friend,—

"My dear Maria, I must confess that I think it a pity your charming daughter, with her grace and attractions, should have accepted the first offer that fell to her share."

"But do you not think Mr. John unexceptionable?"

"I——Do you wish for a candid opinion, my dear Maria?"

"Certainly, Letitia; I should be glad to have the free, unbiased opinion, of a person of your experience."

"Then, if I must be candid, I must say that I think poor Helen is throwing herself away!"

"But why?" asked the other, in unfeigned consternation.

"My love," replied her friend, "you have lived so secluded a life, that I wonder you have contrived to retain your old grace and refinement. You have, however, managed to do

so by a miracle. But, my dear Maria, I think that you must have learnt to dispense with those qualities in others; or you would never for one moment have tolerated the notion of such a son-in-law as John Howard. If my Arthur were one tenth part as uncouth and brusque, I should disown him. He wants refinement sadly, my dear—sadly!" And she sighed.

"But, you said the very reverse, the other evening!"

"True; but first impressions are often deceitful. He was 'on company manners,' I imagine; for he has been very different since then. Besides, he was so very quiet that evening, that it was impossible to judge. But, I think his mother and sister even more objectionable than he is;—they are excessively brusque. However, I have no right to speak against your friends, dearest;—nor am I speaking against them—I am only objecting to their style. They may be, and no doubt are, excellent people at heart."

"But Letitia, Helen must marry; and what chance has she of doing better, in this miserable village?"

"Not in this village, perhaps; but elsewhere, she would, I am certain, make a most brilliant marriage. Only bring her to spend a few months at Staniswood; and the thing is done."

"But it is too late, now," pleaded Mrs. Grey. "They are sincerely attached to each other, and would be unhappy if the engagement were broken off."

"How like one who has for years lived out of the world!" exclaimed her friend, with a laugh. "Every young girl fancies herself in love with the first person who makes her an offer; but, shew her something better, and it is wonderful how soon she will change her mind. Offer a child a white ball and he will gladly accept it;—shew him a scarlet one, and it will supplant the other! My dearest friend, let *me* manage this for you; and I engage that Helen shall win the scarlet ball. Only, not one word to her!"

The party came off, and "went off," brilliantly. Nothing was wanting to complete Helen's felicity. Mrs. Huntingdon had, a few days before, driven to Hapsley; whence she returned, with a new white silk dress, which she begged her dearest Helen to accept, "from her second mamma."—"She was so fond of dressing young people!" She also prayed

Helen to accept some white kid gloves (not eighteen-pennies!) of which she had a box-full; and, as her hand was of the same size as Helen's, that young lady had the great satisfaction of seeing herself, for once, in gloves that did not wrinkle across the back of her hand. Then, Mrs. Huntingdon sent her maid, Harriet, to dress her hair. Altogether, when Helen took a parting survey of herself in the glass, she hardly recognised herself for the same person who had erewhile been decked out in faded dresses, with dirty bits of ribbon stuck here and there (*à la* May-sweep), and with badly-cleaned gloves, in wrinkles. The Thomsons and Lewises gazed on her in evident surprise; and Lucy Howard admiringly whispered,—

"How beautiful you look to night! Does'n't she, John?"

To which her matter-of-fact brother replied, with his quiet smile,—

"I never did think her plain; and, to night she is the same as usual, except that she has, I believe, a new dress."

John could not endure Mrs. Huntingdon. Either an intuitive foreboding warned him that she was to prove his evil genius; or, with his quick perception of character, he saw through the flimsy veil that was cast over hers, and read the monstrous faults concealed beneath it—Pride—Selfishness—Envy—Guile—Avarice,—every bad quality that can find place in a human heart; and which qualities only failed to develop themselves into crimes, through the very cowardice and care for self, which formed an essential part of that unprincipled woman's nature. There was nothing in her heart (conscience, she had none) to deter her from the committal of the greatest crimes—nothing, except that same cautious policy. Mrs. Huntingdon loved *herself* beyond all things; next in her estimation came money; next, position. To one who could have read the thoughts of herself and her friend, it would have been a curious study to observe, how the two, apparently united by the closest bonds of sympathy, were in heart as widely sundered as the poles. Each believed that the other was her dupe, and was playing the most amiable game for her especial benefit; and each was most egregiously deceived. Meanwhile, they "loved" and "dear'd" each other, in the most edifying manner; each mentally pronouncing her friend to be "a born fool!"

But I was talking of the party.

Helen was seated between Mrs. Howard and Mrs. Huntingdon—fit emblem of her mental position with regard to those two ladies; for each was trying to gain an influence over her mind,—the one, for good,—the other, for evil. Mrs. Howard spoke:—

"Helen dear, we have been to day to see poor Mary Carter; and she so lamented not having seen 'dear Miss Helen' lately, that we promised to take you there to-morrow, if you could go."

Helen was about to reply; but Mrs. Huntingdon forestalled her.

"Do pray excuse her this *once*," she urged, with her most fascinating smile. "I had set my heart on driving her to Hapsley, to get a little present which I want her to gratify me by accepting. I am quite jealous of you, Mrs. Howard, and of the influence you exercise over my adopted child!"

Helen knew well, that the "little present" was a new bonnet, of which she stood much in need. She wished Mrs. Howard had said nothing about Mary Carter. In a moment, however, her better feelings reproached her; and she replied,—

"Thank you, dear Mrs. Huntingdon,—I will go with you another day; though I shall really be ashamed to accept your present;—you are always giving me something, and I make no return!"

"No, indeed, you little ungrateful thing! You withhold that which would to me be the most inestimable gift—a return infinitely beyond what my poor little evidences of affection merit!"

"Ah! don't say that, dear Mrs. Huntingdon! You know that I love you! But really it is my duty to go and see poor Mary."

"Why not another day?"

"Because the poor girl is dying—sinking rapidly!" Mrs. Howard sternly replied.

"Can Helen do her any good?" asked the other.

"Yes; Mary has known her for years, and is attached to her; and Helen's presence would soothe the poor creature's dying moments."

"Now, on the contrary, I should be inclined to think that the excitement would be calculated to do her harm," remonstrated the evil genius.

"Well," replied Mrs. Howard, very calmly, "I have given her message to Helen, who can do as she thinks best."

"I shall go with you to-morrow to see her," said Helen. "It would be cruel and inhuman, to refuse."

Mrs. Huntingdon sighed, and looked the personification of wounded affection; but she only said,—

"Dear, amiable child!"

"Excuse me," said Mrs. Howard, "Helen is only doing her duty, and that not in so amiable a manner as I could wish; for I see that she consents unwillingly."

Helen blushed deeply, and glanced appealingly at the speaker. Mrs. Huntingdon took her hand, and drew it caressingly within her arm, as though to shield her from Mrs. Howard's injustice. Helen involuntarily drew closer towards the caressing arm. Mrs. Howard noticed the movement, and drew a sad omen from it.

Mrs. Grey approached.

"What *are* you talking about—you three?" she gaily asked. "I have been watching you for some time."

Mrs. Huntingdon took upon herself to answer,—

"Both Mrs. Howard and I lay claim to this dear child's company to-morrow; and it will require a second judgment of Solomon to decide the case. Now, will you be the wise king on this occasion?"

Mrs. Grey simpered, and displayed the fresh row of teeth with which her Letitia had lately presented her. Mrs. Howard looked very grave; for she could not bear to hear any part of the Bible made the subject of a trifling conversation. She said :—

"Since you have cited that case, I think, that if a similar test be applied, a similar judgment will be awarded. The wise king decided the cause by an appeal to the *heart*. Selfishness was cast aside; and love triumphed."

"Oh! pray do not overwhelm me with a theological discourse!" exclaimed Mrs. Huntingdon, playfully holding her hands to her ears.

Mrs. Howard smiled at her ignorance.

"But," put in Mrs. Grey, "though I don't profess to be a Solomon," (Heaven save the mark, Mrs. Grey!) "I should like to hear the case, and then to offer my humble opinion."

"The case is this," replied her friend. "I want Helen to accompany me to Hapsley to-morrow; but Mrs. Howard wishes her to call on some woman in the village. Now, I contend that the woman can wait—while I cannot. Is it not, therefore, reasonable to expect Helen to accompany me?"

"At all events, it is very good of you to wish it!" was the politic rejoinder. "But now, let me hear the other counsel."

Mrs. Howard answered, very briefly,—

"The girl is dying—may not live a day longer. She loves Helen, and has sent for her."

"Then I fear, my dearest Letitia, I must decide against you!" said Mrs. Grey, who considered that "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush," and had no intention of offending the Howards, till she saw some real and substantial substitute.

Mrs. Huntingdon looked annoyed; Mrs. Howard, pleased.

"I think 'charity begins at home!' I do not altogether approve of young ladies busying themselves so much in parish affairs. It looks very pretty and amiable, and, no doubt, often secures the admiration of young clergymen; but I think there is too much of the Pharisaical spirit, in such ostentatious charity."

Certes, on that principle, no one could have accused Mrs. Huntingdon of being a Pharisee!

"Do you not, then, think that it is our duty to be kind to the poor and helpless?" asked Mrs. Howard.

"Oh! certainly—certainly! But I prefer giving alms through my clergyman, who is far better able to judge of the merits of such cases, than I am. My clergyman, the Rev. Marryon Bagshott, (a most saintly man—quite a St. Paul!) is a very judicious person; and I have the greatest confidence in him. He is High Church."

"I don't like to hear of 'high' and 'low' church!" said Mrs. Howard. "I should think better of the man, if you said he was 'a Christian.' But you were saying, that clergymen are better able to judge, which are the most fitting cases

for the exercise of charity. Now, I cannot agree with you. I think, that we are just as well able to judge, if we will only take the trouble to investigate. Besides, clergymen have so many calls on their time——”

“But,” interrupted Mrs. Huntingdon, “they are so accustomed to poor people!—They know their wants——”

“Nay, we can, if we choose, be just as familiar with their necessities. Clergymen gain that experience, by visiting the humble dwellings of the poor; we have the same opportunity, if we choose to embrace it. Besides, when we delegate our office of almsgiving to another, we lose the pleasure of doing good—of seeing sad faces brighten—of receiving the blessings of our fellow-creatures;—than which, what can be more delightful? To say nothing of the softening, kindly influence shed into our hearts by indulging in feelings of sympathy towards mankind, and the great check which it imposes on our selfishness.”

“But the mother of a family—or one with a large circle of friends—need never be selfish!”

“Pardon me; that is frequently the most insidious form of selfishness. To indulge entirely in what is pleasant to our feelings (such as loving, and thinking for, our children, and being amiable to our friends—from whom, perhaps, we expect to receive services in return), entails no sacrifice—no self-abnegation.”

“Ah! you are advocating the doctrine of *works*!”

Mrs. Howard smiled, rather sarcastically;—

“Nay, I am trying to advocate the doctrine of obedience to the precepts of the religion we profess to believe. When I enter a poor man's house, and do my best to relieve his wants, I am no more doing a meritorious action, than that poor man does, when he gives his children bread. He follows the impulse of nature; I, that of faith. It is as impossible for a father or a mother to refrain from caressing a beloved child, as it is for a sincere Christian to refrain from evidences of the faith—the *living* faith—within him. Works are an *inevitable consequence* of true faith; just as a healthy, vigorous tree will be certain to yield its fruit in season. As to any *merit* attaching to works, remember that they spring from the influence of the Holy Spirit on our hearts, without which,

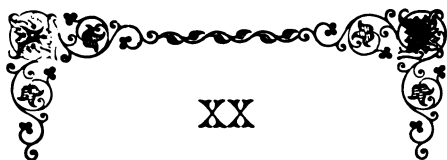
we are told, 'we can do no good thing.' Think, too, how much dross is mingled with the gold!—But I have unintentionally fallen into a discussion; and I see you are weary."

So, in truth, was the lady she addressed, who had made many polite, though abortive, attempts to suppress her yawns.

"What a very tedious person Mrs. Howard is!" remarked Mrs. Huntingdon, after the guests had departed.

"She is a most worthy, excellent person," replied her friend, ever mindful of the fable of the dog and the shadow.

Helen felt, and looked, annoyed; but Mrs. Huntingdon, with her most caressing smiles, told her that she had looked charming all the evening, and that she had caught Mr. Harvey's glances wandering from his beloved Louisa, to her; so that Helen's resentment melted away.



RIVAL INFLUENCES.

"Now, my dearest child," said Mrs. Huntingdon to Helen, next morning; "I will tell you why I wished you so particularly to accompany me to Hapsley to-day. I was there yesterday, and saw the most divine little bonnet imaginable—just in your style; and Madame Delorme promised to keep it until to-day, for your inspection. She thought Miss Thomson would be there to-day, to buy some articles pertaining to her trousseau; and that she would buy that very bonnet, if she saw it. Think, dear, how hard it would be, to be eclipsed by Miss Thomson, with her milk-maid face—just because she had the prettiest bonnet in Brockley! There was a mantle, too, that—but I will not tantalize you, since you cannot go." And she sighed.

Mrs. Grey could refrain no longer.

"Helen, love, I did not say much last night, because I did not like to appear wanting in friendship towards Mrs. Howard; but, really, I think she took a rather exaggerated view of the subject."

Helen wavered. There arose before her mind's eye, a vision of herself, driving in Mrs. Huntingdon's beautiful carriage, arrayed in the coveted attire; of Louisa, and the Curate, trudging past, in the mud; and of John, passing at that identical moment.

"Then, mamma, you wish me to go with Mrs. Huntingdon?"

"My sweetest, I express no wish on the subject. It is

true, that it would afford me very great delight to see you in the bonnet which our kind friend so generously offers you; but, don't think of me, love, or of my disappointment, if Louisa should be before-hand with you. I confess, I had set my heart upon it; but I have so often been disappointed in life, that I am used to it, dear—used to it!"

Mr. Selfishness is a rich gentleman, and has a very extensive wardrobe. In this instance, he entered Helen's heart, attired in the beautiful garb of filial affection. She thought within herself,—

"Is it not my first duty, to make my dear mamma happy? Ought I to hesitate, between pleasing her, and Mrs. Howard?"

Aye; but she did not ask herself the question,—“Suppose mamma had wished me to visit poor Mary, and Mrs. Howard had begged me to go to Madame Delorme's; should I then have been so anxious to gratify mamma?”

It is so easy to clothe Selfishness in the disguise of *Duty*!

Mrs. Huntingdon saw her waver; and threw in the last ounce, which was to break the camel's back.

“But, I think,” she said, “that we might manage to reconcile both plans.”

“Oh! if we could!” exclaimed Helen.

Mrs. Huntingdon added,—

“Why not stop at Mary's on our way back?”

“But,” pleaded Helen, “I have promised to go there with Mrs. Howard.”

“Write her a note, dear, and we can leave it as we go.”

“Suppose poor Mary were to die!”

“Oh! she will not die! Poor people are always pretending they are going to die. It excites compassion!”

Mrs. Grey sat down to write. When the note was finished, she handed it to Helen. It was as follows:—

“MY DEAR MRS. HOWARD,—Helen is *obliged* to go to Hapsley, with our charming friend, who, it seems, made the engagement for her yesterday. To save time, they will call, on their way, to see the poor invalid.

“In greatest haste, believe me,

“Ever your sincere friend,

“MARIA GREY.”

“But, mamma, that reads as if we meant to call on Mary

on our way to Hapsley; whereas, we shall not call till we come back."

Mrs. Huntingdon laughed, called her a little simpleton, and kissed her.

"And, now, love, put on your bonnet; and let us be off."

All the way to Hapsley, Helen suffered from qualms of conscience; but, once exposed to the influence of Madame Delorme's fascination, she forgot all else. The bonnet was purchased, as was also a mantle, and a new parasol; the obsequious Frenchwoman protesting many times, and with much gesticulation,—"*Cela vous va à merveille—a ravir—Mademoiselle!*" till Helen felt herself to be a combination of all the houris in the world; and her tongue went so fast all the way home, and her laugh was so merry, that Mrs. Huntingdon could hardly conceal her exultation.

Had Helen been less preoccupied, she would have observed one, who stopped to gaze on her, as she drove rapidly past him. She did not see him; and, with a heavy sigh, he walked on slowly in the track of the brilliant equipage.

Poor John!

They had arrived at home, and Helen was revelling in the delight of displaying the new purchases to her mother; when a note was handed to Mrs. Grey. It was from Mrs. Howard.

"DEAR MRS. GREY,—I am sorry Helen broke her promise. Poor Mary died at two o'clock this afternoon.

"Yours,

"L. HOWARD."



REPENTANCE.—GOOD RESOLVES.

A WEEK had passed since Mary's death; and still Helen was sad. She could not forgive herself; and she felt that the Howard's condemned her conduct, since they had not called—not even John—since that bitterly regretted day. Had she yielded to the impulses of her heart, she would have sought Mrs. Howard, acknowledged her fault, and begged her forgiveness; but to such a course, both Mrs. Huntingdon and her mother were entirely averse;—Mrs. Huntingdon, because she wished to create a breach between the two families—Mrs. Grey, because her friend's assurances of the brilliant marriage that Helen might make, began to have weight with her.

And so, a week passed. But, one day, at the end of that time, John made his appearance, and asked Helen to take a walk with him. She joyfully acquiesced; much to the annoyance of her mother and Mrs. Huntingdon, whose chilling reception of John was met by him with the most provoking indifference.

Helen knew, by his altered manner, that she was to expect a lecture; and, feeling that she had deserved it, prepared to take it humbly. He did not speak for some time, at last, however, he began:—

“Have you been very unhappy all this week, Helen?”

“I have, indeed.”

“I am glad to hear it. I am glad you are not yet *utterly* heartless!”

She felt her temper rising.

"Is that all the reward I am to get for confessing a fault?" she asked, rather proudly.

"If desire of approbation is your only motive for acknowledging you have done wrong, you do not deserve even that encouragement, he replied."

"I might have remained silent," she said.

"Yes; and thus, by your impenitence, have aggravated your fault! There is no merit in confessing a fault; it is simply a duty."

She made no answer. He continued:—

"Helen, how can you take this tone, when you must feel how wrongly—how unfeelingly, and how wickedly—you have acted! Poor Mary was bitterly disappointed at not seeing you. We hoped, to the last, that you would arrive in time to receive her dying breath. But no—you were enjoying the society of that frivolous, heartless woman; and you forgot the humble creature who for years had loved you! I saw you afterwards, though you were too preoccupied to notice me.—You drove rapidly past; yet not so rapidly, but that I marked your flushed cheek and laughing eye, and noticed the burst of merriment with which you greeted some sally from your gay friend. Oh! Helen! Helen! you are fearfully changed!"

She raised her face in mute entreaty, and then bowed it down upon his arm.

"What, Helen darling,—tears? Nay, I have been too harsh! There love, don't think any more about it.—I have been unfeeling and tyrannical! Don't cry, dear child!"

"No John—no;—you are quite right! I have acted most heartlessly! I don't deserve that you, or anyone that is good, should love me! And you don't know all, John. You don't know *why* I broke my promise to your mother, and let poor Mary die without seeing me.—I wanted to accompany Mrs. Huntingdon to Hapsley, because she promised to give me a new bonnet at Madame Delorme's, and I was afraid Louisa would get there before me, and would buy it. When I set out, I intended to call on poor Mary on my return; but I forgot all about it, until your mother's note came. Oh, John! you have not spoken half so harshly as I have deserved!"

"My darling," he replied, very soothingly, "don't grieve!—I can't bear to see you so unhappy! Besides, you were not so much to blame, as that woman. I wish, with all my heart, she had never come!"

"No, no John," she eagerly interrupted; "it was all my own fault. I longed to go. I went of my own free will.—And, indeed, indeed John, you think too well of me. I am growing terribly worldly. I am becoming fond of money, and fine clothes, and station, and—and every thing that can be called 'Mammon!' Do you remember that picture in one of the old books we used to look through when Lucy and I were children?"

"What was it, dear?"

"There was a frightful-looking creature—half ghou! half devil—almost buried under a mountain of gold. He seemed to gloat over it in horrid rapture; and his claws clutched fiercely at the gold pieces nearest to him. Up this mountain toiled a multitude of little men and little women;—toiled, with great difficulty, on account of the heavy sacks of gold they were carrying on their backs, and the weight of which made them bend almost double, with their faces to the ground. They were all so intent upon bringing their offerings to the treasury of the god of this world, that they did not pause to look back; or they would have seen the beautiful valley they were leaving behind them. And in that valley there was a tomb, bearing the inscription, 'Happiness;' and a weeping figure mourned over it. I have often thought of that picture, John; and I think that it would be a good thing if young girls could always have it before them, to be reminded, that they who worship Mammon—whether in the shape of fame, or money, or fine houses, or fine friends,—in whatever form it may be cloaked—that they may be reminded of what they are sacrificing, namely—Happiness!"

She sighed very heavily, and clung more closely to his arm. Was it, that her good angel then gave her a presage of the future,—a terrible foreshadowing of her own fate?

John did not reply; he was thinking to himself, that the moral need not be confined to young girls, and that scheming mothers might glean many a lesson from it.

"My dear," he said at last, "you will have to make your

peace with my mother ; she is very much vexed. Suppose we just look in upon her, and make it all right ? ”

“ I’m afraid, John. ”

“ Oh ! don’t fear ; she has always loved you as though you were her own daughter.—A prophetic feeling, perhaps ! ”

Helen blushed, and a ray of comfort beamed in her heart.

“ I’m sure I don’t deserve that she or you should still think of— ” she hesitated.

“ Of making you the dearest little wife in all the world, and taking you out of the way of all the Mrs. Huntingdons that abound in it ?—By the bye, I have an idea ! ”

“ What is it ? ”

“ Why should our marriage be delayed any longer, Helen dear ? Isn’t it just as easy to be married next month, as next year ? ”

“ Oh ! no, John—that can’t be ! ”

“ Why not ? ”

“ For a hundred reasons. ”

“ Name one. ”

“ Mamma would not let me marry without a suitable trousseau, and it is not yet ready. ”

“ Nonsense, child ! Where’s the need of a *trousseau* ? You have plenty of clothes ; and I like you just as you are. I don’t want you to be bedizened from head to foot, only because you are my wife ! Now tell me, do you care about this wonderful *trousseau* ? ”

“ Well, I should like to do as other people do, John. ”

“ Mammon ! Mammon ! ” said John, half in jest, half in earnest. “ You are looking to the ground, and are turning your back upon the pleasant valley. ”

“ You are right, John ! ” she frankly exclaimed, “ and I will not—I do not—care about the trousseau ! ”

“ That’s my own Helen ! I don’t think the weeping lady need trouble herself to seek the tomb ; for we won’t have it built in *our* happy valley,—will we Helen ? ”

“ Ah, John ! if you were always near me, to tell me when my feet begin to climb the mountain ! ”



SKIRMISHING.

"How could you bring yourself to pass the evening with that dull, unprepossessing mother and daughter?" asked Mrs. Huntingdon of Helen, as the latter returned home, after prolonging her absence until ten o'clock.

"They are not dull!" she indignantly exclaimed. "They are the best and dearest people in the world, and the most delightful; and I have never loved them more than I do now!"

"All for Damon's sake!" responded the other, in an ironical voice. "Damon, *mère* and *sœur*, shine in your heart with a reflected lustre, my dear!"

"They do not!—I love them for themselves!"

"Well, don't be angry, love!—And was Damon in good temper; or did he scold? I forgot to notice his face; for my eyes were fascinated by his boots, which were, I assure you my dear, a perfect curiosity—quite worthy of being sent to the British Museum!—But tell me—did Damon chide his——"

"He isn't Damon!—he is John!" she sharply exclaimed.

"Ah, yes!—Johannes. Well dear, what said Johannes?"

"John said a great deal to me that was very true; and which I trust I shall never forget!" she answered, with flashing eyes.

"Ah! then, Johannes *was* irate?"

"He was displeased with me, as he had the right to be; and in telling me of my faults, he proves himself to be my truest friend. I love John, and am not ashamed to say so. I am proud of being thought worthy of him. I love Mrs.

Howard and Lucy dearly—dearly; and I will not hear either them or him ridiculed, if I can help it!”

Tears, half of sorrow, half of rage, were gathering in her eyes. Determined that Mrs. Huntingdon should not see them, she hastily left the room.

“Oh! Marty, Marty!” she sobbed, as she sought her old friend, “I wish all the world were like you!”

“Why, what’s the matter now, my dearie?” asked Marty, with a world of anxious love in her eyes.

“She has been laughing at John, and at Mrs. Howard and Lucy; and I won’t bear it Marty—I won’t bear it!” she cried, with an impatient stamp of her foot.

“No more you didn’t ought to!” exclaimed Marty, with a counter stamp. “Oh! they’re a nice pair on ’em—they two!”

“Hush, Marty—hush! don’t speak against mamma! I won’t allow it.—*She* is not worldly!”

“Then you mind what you’re after; or, as sure as I’m a sinful woman, you’ll lose Mr. John!”

“Oh, Marty! don’t say that!—don’t!”

“But I *will* say it; and what’s more, I’ll tell you what’s bin on my mind this ever so long. Them two is a’tryin’ to stop you and Mr. John from keepin’ company; and they’ll do it too, if you don’t look sharp!”

“No, indeed, Marty,” said Helen, very decidedly; “nothing can separate us now! And what do you think, Marty? We are going to be married very soon;—we are not going to wait for the trousseau.”

“That’s a dear child! What should you be a’botherin’ yourself for about a truce ho!—when you’ve got such lovely clothes as Mrs. Huntingdon has gave you? And your own pretty face, my dear, is better than all the truce ho’s in the world;—and so Mr. John thinks, I know! And I’ll tell you a secret, my lamb. You’ll, maybe, mind Peter Jones, as I kep’ company with when you was a bit of a child?”

“Yes, Marty; he used to give you red apples, and oranges, tied up in a blue handkerchief with white spots on it;—and carrots, and onions.”

“Yes, my dear. Well, Peter walked with me four year; and then he says one day, says he,—‘Marty, we’ve kep’ company long enough. Why can’t we be married, Marty?’

says he.—‘Law, bless the man!’ I says; ‘it can’t be done!’ says I.—Then he says,—‘Why not, Marty?’ says he. And I says,—‘I ain’t got no mind to be married yet, Peter. When my young missis is married,’ says I, (you was a bit of a thing then) I’ll think about it,’ I says. So he doesn’t say never a word more about it for twelve months; and then he says, (one Sunday, a’comin’ from church)—‘Well Marty?’ says he—never a word more but ‘well Marty?’ ‘Well Peter?’ says I. ‘I think we’ve kep’ company long enough to know our minds,’ he says. ‘And so I thinks,’ says I. ‘Then,’ says he, ‘let’s be married!’ (And I mind how he guv’ me a squeegee that druv the door-key into my hand, and made me screech.) ‘Not yet, Peter,’ I says; ‘I ain’t got no time now.’ ‘When will you have time, Marty?’ says he, rather cross-like. ‘Not now—p’raps, never!’ I says; (for I didn’t see what call he had to talk like that!) ‘Very well Marty,’ he says, and walks away. And then Jenny Maples gets hold of him, and he marries her.”

“Poor Marty! and that was how he married Jenny Maples?”

“Yes, my dear. But poor Jenny died two year is a week; and now, Peter wants me to keep company again; and we’ll be married, my dear, the same day as you and Mr. John!” And Marty, in the exuberance of her feelings, gave vent to a “haw! haw!” which brought Mrs. Grey into the kitchen, with a stern reprimand.

Meanwhile, the two ladies had been engaged in earnest colloquy, the result of which was the following speech from Mrs. Huntingdon,—

“Yes Maria; you are too confiding—too unsuspicious and unworldly, to deal with this matter. Leave it to me;—I will engage to bring about a satisfactory ending.” And the pair separated for the night, each pronouncing the other “an arrant fool.”

Those two were not so dissimilar in the main. They were both schemers;—were both, to a certain extent, playing into each other’s hands; and each congratulated herself on having completely gulled her friend. Neither understood the other. They were both utterly unprincipled; and the only difference between them was, that one was a clever knave, the other—a weak fool.



THE FIRST FALSE STEP.

"HELEN, dearest," said Mrs. Grey, the following morning, "I have the pleasantest piece of news for you! Mrs. Huntingdon has invited us to accompany her back to Staniswood; and we start next Thursday."

Helen's countenance fell.

To leave John, so soon after having offended him! To leave John, who was more to her than all the Staniswoods in the universe!

"Oh! don't go, mamma!" burst from her lips.

"Not go, my dear? I would not miss it on any account! Such a splendid opportunity of seeing good society, and forming advantageous connexions! I shall feel as if I were young again; and when I see you, my dearest child, caressed and admired, as you will be, in the highest circles, nothing will be wanting to complete my happiness."

But still Helen looked blank. Mrs. Grey gazed on her; and then folded her hands in meek resignation.

"Ah!" she sighed, "I see how it is! You don't like to leave the Howards!—Very natural, too, my darling; and very selfish of me, to wish it! I am growing old and stupid, and forget that a time comes when it is natural for children to love others better than their parents!"

(The pocket-handkerchief was here flourished.)

"No mamma; such a time will never come, to me!" cried Helen. "Don't talk in that way, mamma! as if I would not give up everything, for the sake of giving you pleasure!"

"I know you would, dearest; and I am a selfish old wretch, for not remembering how far rather you would stay here, than go to Staniswood! Do you know, love, I hardly slept, last night, for thinking of all the conquests you would make—all the beautiful dresses Mrs. Huntingdon would give you; and how, after a month—one short month—spent there, you would return to Brockley, with your manners polished and refined by intercourse with the fashionable world,—with all that ineffable refinement and fascination which are to be acquired in the first circles only. I thought, love, how John would admire you—how you would be the envy and admiration of the Brockleyites!—But how I run on! Forgive me, dearest;—we will stay here!"

All this time, Helen had been thinking,—“And shall I disappoint her in all these schemes—these kind, unselfish aspirations for *me*? A month will soon be over; and then, what happiness to return home, and, as mamma says, with my attractions heightened, to meet John again!” So she answered,—

“Mamma, I should like, very much, to go to Staniswood;—I should, indeed! All that you say is very true. It would be folly, to throw away such an opportunity.”

“Nay, my dearest; I fear you say so to please me!”

“No, indeed, mamma; I should like it exceedingly.”

Then there was much scheming and plotting as to what it would be desirable to take, and what to leave behind; whether to get such a dress, or bonnet, or pair of shoes, or to wait till they got to Staniswood. Then again, whether or not they should take Marty; and whether her wardrobe needed revision. All these subjects so engrossed them, that her temporary separation from the Howards was for a time lost sight of by Helen; but, in the midst of their consultation, John came in.

He never seemed to breathe freely in Mrs. Grey's presence; and now, as usual, after conversing for a few moments on various topics, he asked his usual question,—

“Will you come out, Helen?”

“I am afraid she cannot spare time, just now, Mr. John,” interposed Mrs. Grey, with her blandest smile. “Helen was just arranging with me as to our approaching visit to Staniswood.”

He looked thunderstruck.

"To Staniswood!" he repeated. "I have heard nothing of it!" And he looked towards Helen, for an explanation.

"Nor I, till a quarter of an hour ago," she replied, with her frank, earnest expression. "Mamma arranged it last night, with Mrs. Huntingdon."

An objectionable malediction, in connection with Mrs. Huntingdon's name, passed through John's mind, but fortunately found no utterance; however, he looked black as night.

"But don't go, John," pleaded Helen; "for I should like to have a walk, this beautiful day; and mamma and I can finish our discussion afterwards. I will not be five minutes, getting ready."

As soon as she had left the room, Mrs. Grey began,—

"Dear child! she is so enthusiastic! The thought of this visit seems quite to exhilarate her!"

"Does she, then, *wish* to go? or have you persuaded her?" he sternly demanded.

"My dear Mr. John!—as if I *would* do such a thing! I thought it would have been more natural for her to wish to stay here; and I have actually tried to persuade her to do so."

"And she will not?"

"She is willing—dear child! to do anything I like; but she confesses to a *wish* to go."

Darker and darker grew the shadow on his brow. His heart was very heavy. Helen entered the room, looking so bright and happy, so young and sanguine, that he almost groaned to think of the disparity of years and temperament between himself and her.

"And is it possible," he asked, as soon as they were alone "that you *wish* to leave Brockley, and—and me?"

"But only for a month, John! Only for a month!"

What love was that, which could call a month's absence "only!" To him, that month would be an eternity—a weary, weary lifetime! He was too proud to say what he felt; therefore, he remained silent.

Ah! that pride! How it stands in the way of our happiness! How many of us can recall some time or other, when

a few words of gentleness—of sacrifice on the altar of pride—would have saved us long years of misery! Pride was John's bane; worldliness was Helen's. On those two rocks they split; and the shipwreck was awful. If John had said, "Helen, I love you so dearly, that the thought of being separated from you, for even one month, is insupportable. You are young and attractive—you will be admired by men nearer your own age than I am, and more fascinating. I tremble for their influence; and I love you so passionately, that to lose you would drive me mad!"—if he had said this, Helen would have yielded. But he did not. He said it a few days later; but then, all the arrangements were made for the journey, and Helen could only reply,—

"It is too late, John. I wish I were not going—I wish you had spoken sooner; but I must go now!"

"Then you will write to me twice a week, Helen?"

"Yes,—oftener, if I can. And how I shall long for your letters, John!"

"And Helen, dearest, remember that you are all the world to me, and that if you were to change, it would break my heart—" He could not finish his sentence.

"Oh, John!—You know—you *know* I could not be so unprincipled—so wicked! Besides, it is no matter of principle between us, but one of *feeling*; and I could never like any one so well as you!"

"Helen, darling, don't grow worldly. Don't let your love of show lead you away! I dread that most of all. Your vanity, too, will be terribly flattered!"

"John," she replied, looking earnestly in his face, "I will be true to you, in thought, word, and deed; as true as though you were present, and could read my heart!"

"Another thing, Helen.—Do not repose too much confidence in Mrs. Huntingdon; she is not to be trusted! Above all, let no misunderstanding spring up between us. Tell me, as you say, every thought of your heart."

"I will John."

"Does Marty go with you?"

"I believe so."

"Do not despise that humble friend's advice; there is more sterling goodness—aye, and more good sense, too,—in

Marty, than in ten thousand Mrs. Huntingdons. Marty has a strict sense of honor."

"She has, John; and whenever I take her advice, I am sure to do well."

"God bless you, my own Helen!" He strained her passionately to his heart.

And so, they parted.



NEW IMPRESSIONS.

THEY had arrived at Staniswood; and Helen, utterly bewildered by the great Hall, and the numbers of servants, and the stately grand-staircase, and the spacious corridor, sat down, to try and collect her scattered senses.

Her room was furnished in the most luxurious style; and she wondered whether she should ever be able to consider it a bed-room. Wonderful ottomans and couches, richly carved mirrors, ornaments in Sevres China, clocks, lamps—everything to feast her eye and charm her fancy—seemed to be congregated in that delightful room. As she looked round, and called to mind her little humble apartment at Brockley, a sensation of shame—almost of disgust—crept over her;—a feeling of unwillingness to return to her homely dwelling. She approached one of the windows, and looked out. “How exquisite!” she thought; for before her was a soft, emerald lawn, sloping down towards a row of trees, beyond which, stretched, far away, the purple hills, rising one above the other. To the right, she saw the openings of some wooded paths; and she could hear the silvery murmur of a brook, and could fancy it rippling over stones, and moss, and many coloured pebbles; and she pictured to herself the wild flowers that grew upon its banks. Mingled with the sound of the water, was the song of birds—the blackbird, the thrush, the finch, and many others;—she could distinguish them all; and their voices came floating richly, yet softly, through the quiet air, making her feel very happy.

"Is that a nightingale, I wonder? Oh! if John were here, to tell me! Oh! if John were here!"

She had not thought of him, while gazing around on her splendid room. That was all Art, and had no affinity with him;—this was Nature.

"How pleasant it would be, to walk with him in those delicious paths, and to sit down with him beside the stream, and have long talks!" She sighed. "But I can take his letters there to read;—that will be next best to himself!"

She left the window, and, perceiving another door at the other end of the room, opened it.

"Dear me! how beautiful! This must be the drawing-room."

Just then, Mrs. Huntingdon entered the bed-room, and not finding Helen there, sought her in the inner room.

"What a beautiful drawing-room!" repeated Helen.

"Drawing-room?—you little goose!—this is your own sitting-room, or sanctum, or whatever you like to call it. Whenever you want to be alone—not to be bored by people—you can take refuge here."

Helen was too much astonished, for speech.

"Do you like your rooms, dearest?" pursued her friend.

"Like them?" was all she could say.

"I shall send Harriet to you, to help you to dress? Or would you prefer Marty?"

"Oh! Marty, please!" she eagerly exclaimed, clutching at the idea of anything homely, which, she had a vague notion, was the only thing that could save her from insanity.

"Oh, Marty!" she said, when that functionary entered the room.

"Oh, Miss Helen!" said Marty, treading on the handsome carpet, as if it burnt her feet. Then she sat down upon the extreme edge of one of the chairs, and grasped her knees with both hands, as though to assure herself of the existence of *something* tangible, and familiar to her former experience. At last she spoke, in low, mysterious tones.

"Miss Helen, my mind's a perfect chowse! (Chaos?) All my ideas is of a heap; and I feel all no-how!"

"So do I, Marty. But isn't it all beautiful? How horrid the co tige will seem after it! I shall dread going back, I'm sure!"

"Oh! don't say that, Miss Helen! Think of Mr. John!"

Helen blushed painfully; and a feeling of remorse crept into her heart.

"Yes, Marty; for that reason, of course I would rather be at Brockley. But if Mrs. Howard, and Lucy, and John, were here, how nice it would be!—What's that noise? I hope the house isn't on fire!" she exclaimed, in alarm.

"I'll go and see," said Marty. Returning hastily, she exclaimed, "Do'ee make haste, Miss Helen! That was what they call a 'gong'; and it'll make that there noise again presently, and then you'll have to go down to dinner."

"Dear me, Marty!—and I haven't decided what I shall wear!—My black silk?—No; it's too shabby.—My lilac muslin?—No, I think not.—My grey silk?—Yes; I think that will do, if it isn't too grand. What do you think, Marty?"

"Law, yes!—much too grand! And to be sure you wouldn't think of putting on your best Sunday silk on a week-day? Why, the lilac muslin's too good, even!"

So Helen donned the lilac muslin, and, adding a modest pink bow to the same, descended (pioneered by Harriet) to the drawing-room. The door was thrown open; and there she stood, transfixed with delight, and overcome by an awful sense of her own insignificance. Such splendour had never for one moment entered her imagination; and she stood there, as if enchanted by some sudden spell; until Mrs. Huntingdon advanced, and led her to a window, before which stood one, whom Helen immediately pronounced, in her own mind, to be the most splendid-looking gentleman that had ever been born.

Mrs. Huntingdon spoke laughingly:—

"My love, allow me to present to you a gentleman in whom I feel a very deep interest;—my son, Arthur."

Helen started; for so seldom had Mrs. Huntingdon mentioned this son, that she had quite forgotten his existence.

Mr. Huntingdon, instead of bowing in a stately, formal manner, as one of the Brockley beaux would have done on a first introduction, cordially shook hands with her; and, so great was the charm of his manner, that, in a very short time, she had cast off all reserve, and was laughing and chatting as freely as if she had known him for years.

"What a beautiful garden you have!" she said. "I long to explore it."

‘Do you? Then you must allow me to be your escort.’

“Oh! thank you!” she replied, delighted.

“It will be quite a pleasure to me, to wander about with such a fresh little creature as you!” he said with a glance that brought the colour to her cheeks.

Dinner was now announced; and Mrs. Grey, in all the glory of a new cap, sailed down to the dining-room on Mr. Huntingdon’s arm.

Again Helen was lost in wonderment, at the magnificent plate, and glass, the number of dishes, and at the two servants who waited, and of whom, (*entre nous*) she stood in great awe. She tried to feel at her ease, and to talk unrestrainedly; but it would not do—she felt uncomfortable, and terribly afraid of committing some offence against good-breeding. Not so her mother, who twittered and chirped, and bobbed about her little head, in a manner that excited Mr. Huntingdon’s risible nerves, and made the “sweetest Letitia” wish her “charming friend” elsewhere.

When they left the dining-room, Helen again sought her own apartments, which, compared with the sitting-rooms below, no longer awed her as they had before done. She was soon joined by her mother.

“Well,” began that lady, radiant with smiles; “can you not fancy yourself in fairy-land?”

“Do you think I shall *ever* become used to it, mamma, and not feel awkward?”

“Of course, love. A few days will quite accustom you to it. Ah, Helen! what a fate—to be mistress of this splendid place!”

Helen sighed. Her mother resumed:—

“What do you think of Mr. Huntingdon, my dear?”

“He is a most delightful person, mamma—so kind and gentle; he set me at my ease in a moment. And is he not handsome, with that light waving hair, and those bright blue eyes?—And oh, mamma! don’t you think a moustache gives a very grand look to a gentleman?”

“Certainly, my dear; but Mr. Huntingdon’s *tout ensemble* is most fascinating;—nothing provincial, about *him*!”

“And how beautifully he dresses, mamma!—Or, is it his graceful, bending figure, which would become any dress?”





"His figure, my dear, would become any dress; but the dress itself goes a great way. Mr. Huntingdon is a fair specimen of a handsome, well-bred, well-dressed, and most fascinating English gentleman. No wonder his mother was hyper-critical with regard to the Brockley beaux!"

Helen coloured. She thought of John—of his thick boots, and careless dress; and she mentally resolved to reform both.

"But let us go to the drawing-room, my dear. We must not appear rude!"

Before long, Mr. Huntingdon joined them.

"May I claim your promise?" he asked, addressing Helen; "the evening is beautiful—most favorable for a ramble."

"Oh, yes! thank you."

And in a few minutes they had entered one of those wooded paths that she had seen from her window. The nut-trees met over-head, and the birds were singing in their branches. There was a soft, balmy feeling in the air; and Helen thought that only *one* thing was wanting to complete her enjoyment—John's presence. But her companion was so delightful, that she soon forgot even that want; and rambled on, sometimes beside him, sometimes running on before, or stooping to pick one of the wild flowers that grew in rich luxuriance on either side of the path.

At last they came to an abrupt descent of rough stone steps, which led to the brook. Her companion offered to assist her; but she bounded forward, and reached the bottom first.

"What a wild little thing it is!" he exclaimed, much amused.

"Oh! I forgot," she said, in confusion. "You know, I have always lived in the country.—I hope you will not think me *very gauche*!"

She looked up, with a deprecating glance.

"*Gauche*? Nay, it is a treat to meet one so perfectly a child of nature as yourself!" he replied. "I have been so much in towns, and so used to the conventional manners of town-bred girls, that a touch of nature is most refreshing to me."

She had seated herself on a slab of stone close to the brook; and he now sat down beside her.

"I am glad of that," she replied, much relieved.—"And will you promise not to think me wild and unformed?"

"I promise to think you all that is delightful!" was his gullant reply; and his tones were so very gentle, and the glance of his blue eyes so soft, that Helen thought of John, and felt as if she ought not to sit there any longer. She picked up a pebble, and threw it into the water.

"Throwing stones!" he said, with a comic look; — "Another evidence of country breeding!"

"Oh! please, don't tell mamma!" she anxiously entreated.

"Why not tell mamma?"

"She would be shocked!—But let us return now," she added; for she had a very uncomfortable feeling,—as if John ought to be there. So they retraced their steps.

"What a relief it will be to me, to talk with you, instead of with the sophisticated young damsels who are coming to stay with us!" he continued.

"Are they?" she asked, in blank dismay; her thoughts instantly reverting to her wardrobe, and to the probable contrast it would present to theirs.

"Yes; we expect a house full of people in a day or two. The Athertons come to-morrow; then follow the Cliftons, Marshes, Willinghams, and the rest."

"Oh! do describe them to me!"

"Well—to begin with the Athertons.—Miss Atherton is a very fine girl, though not in *my* style. She is tall, and fair, and large, and has sleepy eyes, and *more* than auburn hair! Mrs. Atherton is a fashionable woman of the world, and a schemer; her husband is a nonentity. Lord Clifton is a good sort of fellow, — young, and tolerably well-favored, though somewhat soft. Lady Clifton, his mother, is a terrible bore; for she is as deaf as a post, and sometimes makes most unfortunate blunders, through her wish to appear cognizant of all that is said. The Willinghams—cousins of ours—are nice people. Kate is a pretty brunette; Grace is plain and uninteresting. Their invitation is of six months' standing; they would not have been asked, I know; for my mother is, for some reason or other, very averse to their coming here this year. The Marshes are an unhappy couple."

"Why?"

"Mrs. Marsh was supposed to be very much in love with one Mr. Hewson; but, dazzled by the golden charms of Mr. Marsh, she accepted him. Since then, he has somehow lost a great part of his wealth; so that the lady is disappointed, and they are not happy. Then, there are two fellows—Rexford and Ponsonby. I think those are all."

"And enough too!" thought Helen, again mentally reverting to her toilette.

That night, she sat down to write to John; but her brain was in such a whirl, that her epistle was anything but coherent.—

"MY DEAR JOHN,—How I wish you were here! Such a splendid house—and so many servants—and such lovely grounds! We went down to a brook, by a delicious little green path—he shewed me the way. And he says that a great many people are coming here, and that we shall be very gay; but I don't think I shall like any of them much. Oh! I do wish you were here!

"Good-bye, dear John. I have not time to write more; but I will send you a long letter the day after to-morrow.

"Yours affectionately,

"HELEN."

When John read this epistle, he could not imagine who the "he" was. However, having never heard of Mr. Huntingdon, he concluded she spoke of the gardener—especially as she had just mentioned the number of servants at Staniswood.

Helen had hardly finished the letter, when her mamma entered the room.

"Writing to John, dear?"

"Yes, mamma."

"*Apropos*, love, I am quite sure you have too much delicacy of feeling, to obtrude your engagement (if so it may be called) on anyone. The less that is known of such affairs the better."

"Why, mamma; it is nothing to be ashamed of!"

"Well, perhaps not, love," replied her mother, in a doubtful tone; "but in good society—amongst *genteel* people—such things are never alluded to."

"May I not even tell Mr. Huntingdon?"

"Not unless you wish him to think you a person of no delicacy of feeling, dear! But good-night; I am quite worn-out with fatigue."

Meanwhile, Mrs. Huntingdon had joined her son, who was solacing himself with a cigar.

"Well Arthur—what do you think of her?"

"She is a pretty little thing—charmingly fresh," he replied, "but her dress is execrable!—Do, for Heaven's sake, remodel it!"

"Yes, yes," she hastily replied. He continued:—

"But the mother!—How could you have been induced to bring here, such a combination of vulgarity and assumption? Could you not have brought the daughter, alone?"

"No Arthur; we shall need her influence to bias Helen's mind. I fancy there was some rustic adorer in the village, whose memory will have to be erased."

"No engagement?—nothing of that sort?" he hastily demanded.

"Oh dear no!"

"Ah! that's right! She is a nice little thing. I never saw anything richer than the glow of her cheek, as she sat beside the brook, with the sunset streaming in on her through the trees; and there is a purple hue in her hair, such as I have rarely seen. Then, what long lashes! She must have Spanish blood in her veins! And her foot and hand—how diminutive! Her figure, too, though *petite*, and quite unformed, is grace itself!"

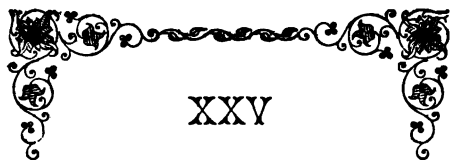
"Arthur," his mother laughingly exclaimed, "you are in love already!"

"No mother; but in this case I feel it to be my *duty* to fall in love!"

And he, too, laughed.

As Marty bade her young mistress good-night, she added,—

"Dont'ee forget Mr. John—that's a dear!"



DISQUIET.

RETURNING, late the next afternoon, from a stroll with Mr. Huntingdon, Helen learnt that the Athertons had arrived. Before seeing Miss Atherton, she felt an instinctive dislike to her—she was determined not to like her. She had a disagreeable presentiment that Miss Atherton would outshine her, especially in dress; therefore, when Marty took out the lilac muslin, she peremptorily exclaimed,—

“No, not that!—The grey silk.”

“What?—your best Sunday gown?”

“Certainly, Marty; I wish to be well-dressed to-day. It will be quite a dinner-party.”

And the grey silk was put on. Alas! the moment she entered the drawing-room, she felt that she might just as well have worn the lilac muslin, or, in fact have spared herself the trouble of performing any toilet at all; for there sat Miss Atherton, dressed in pale blue, of a most exquisite shade, trimmed with expensive lace; her whole “getting up” being perfect!

Helen quietly retired to a distant corner of the room, feeling small in the extreme, and hoping to escape notice; but Miss Atherton languidly raised her eye-glass, and scrutinized her with a degree of cool assurance that completely disconcerted her. Then she made some remark to Mr. Huntingdon (who was seated beside her), at which he laughed.

Helen’s blood boiled.—“Oh! if John were here,” she

thought, "he would soon bring that fine Miss Atherton to her senses!"

But John was not there; and Mr. Huntingdon continued to laugh and talk with his fair companion—excessively polite in him, considering she was "not in his style!"

Helen tried to console herself, by dwelling on that speech of his;—tried to fancy she pitied Miss Atherton for being so mistaken as to suppose that Mr. Huntingdon admired her. But it would not do; he evidently *did* admire the new comer exceedingly. If Miss Atherton had made any effort to attract him, Helen would not have felt so annoyed; but she did not do so;—she only looked grand, and tired, and bored, and received his manifest admiration as her due, without seeming to care much about it.

At last, however, Mrs. Huntingdon displaced her son, and took his seat; at the same time bestowing on him a meaning glance. He laughed; and crossed the room, to join Helen, who, however, repelled his advances in great ill-humour.

Dinner passed off heavily; Helen, chafing beneath the cold, contemptuous stare with which Miss Atherton regarded her, and which she had not sufficient nerve to return. "Oh! money—money!" she thought; "what power it gives!—Now, here is this girl, with the power to make me uncomfortable, just because she is better dressed than I am!" So also thought Mrs. Grey; who, however, bore, with far more spirit, the mournfully pitying glances of Mrs. Atherton, and returned them with looks of spite. Mr. Huntingdon was in high spirits; laughing and talking, in a manner that seemed somewhat to annoy his mother, whose glance wandered nervously from her son to Mrs. Grey, and thence to Helen. Their adjournment to the drawing-room was a blessing to all.

When Mr. Huntingdon joined the ladies, he at once approached Helen.

"Can I tempt you forth this evening also?" he asked.

"Thank you—no; I have letters to write," she replied, very coldly.

"Can't they wait?"

"No."

She went to her room, to indite a letter to Lucy.

"MY DEAR LUCY,—I must tell you about some most disagreeable people, who have come here. Their name is Atherton. The mother is a sharp-faced, ill-natured looking woman; and the daughter is about six feet high, very stout, and has red hair. She is vulgar and ill-bred; and I fancy she has not been accustomed to good society, for she stares at us as if we were the first civilized creatures she had ever met. The poor thing is trying to attract Mr. Huntingdon; but, as he told me he did not admire red-haired people, she will be sadly disappointed. Oh, Lucy! how I wish you were all here! This place is enchanting—would be, at least, but for those Athertons. I don't like Mr. Huntingdon at all; though he is sometimes agreeable enough, he has, at other times, a wild, flighty manner, that is not at all pleasant. I hope the other people who are coming, will be nicer than the Athertons; or I shall wish myself back at Brockley.—Good-bye, dear Lucy."

When she had sealed this note, she sat down before her window, feeling that she ought to join the company below, yet dreading the stare of Miss Atherton. After awhile, her mother came to seek her.

"Why, Helen my love, what possesses you, to come moping here?—So unusual, my dear!"

"I don't like that Miss Atherton, mamma; and I won't sit there, to be stared at!"

"Why not stare at her again, my dear?"

Helen burst into a fit of laughter—"That reminds me of the cobbler, who, when told by a little boy, 'Mr. Last, your dog has bitten me,' replied, 'Well, you bite him again.'"

"And very sensible advice too, my love. But really you must come down stairs. If you do not, Miss Atherton, who is really very impertinent and ill-bred, will think you cannot bear to see her talking with Mr. Huntingdon. Besides, don't leave her the triumph of having drawn him away from you."

"But mamma, I don't care for his attentions. What are they to me? I am engaged!" she replied, with extreme dignity.

"True, my dear; and therefore, in accepting the evident admiration with which Mr. Huntingdon regards you, you cannot be supposed, by his mother, to have any designs upon

him. I am sure he admires you very much; and I was sorry to see how coldly you received his advances. As soon as you left the room, he sat down beside Miss Atherton; who half opened her sleepy eyes, and said something that made him laugh. She evidently thinks she has eclipsed you!"

"Then I will undeceive her!" exclaimed Helen, with a burst of passion. "Come, marama, I will stare back at her! She shan't have Mr. Huntingdon!"

Entering the drawing-room, she took a book, and withdrew into a quiet corner, as if to read. Before long, Mr. Huntingdon joined her.

"Well," he said, "are the letters finished?"

"Yes, quite finished," she replied, with the most amiable of smiles.

"And are you now disposed for a ramble?"

"I should like to go a little way."

As she left the room, she glanced back at her rival; who, however, seemed not even to notice her departure, but was employed in arranging her ringlets before the glass.

This evening they crossed the lawn, and entered the grove beyond.—The air was very still; and a sort of melancholy seemed to float upon its noiseless waves. Mr. Huntingdon's manner had changed; he looked sad, and spoke mournfully.

"Life!—Life!" he muttered. "A boon—a curse!"

Evidently, he had forgotten his companion's presence; and she gazed and listened in astonishment, wondering what he would say next. But he spoke no more for some time; then, apparently making a great effort over himself, he fell into his usual tone of careless gaiety.

"These people bore you, Helen, do they not?—Excuse me," he added, with a laugh; for she coloured as he pronounced her name. "I am so accustomed to hear my mother address you by your Christian name, that it comes naturally to me to do so."

After that, he never made any further apology for the liberty, nor any attempt to call her "Miss Grey."

"But," he resumed, "don't these people bore you?"

"I don't like them," she replied.

"You see," he continued, "I am obliged to 'do' Miss Atherton a little for the present; but when the others come, I shall be free to enjoy myself."

"You do not admire her, then?" she asked.

"Hers is not the style I admire. A fine girl, certainly; but not *my* ideal," he replied.

He glanced very meaningfully at Helen. She thought of John, then of Miss Atherton. Vanity triumphed; honour and duty went to the wall.

"It would be ridiculous," she thought, "most ridiculous, in me, to suppose he admires me. He likes me, and does not like Miss Atherton. I will show her that she is mistaken in supposing she can eclipse me. Mr. Huntingdon shall not leave me, the whole evening!"

So, instead of coldly repelling the insinuated compliment, she smiled on her companion; and Miss Atherton was deserted. Helen caught her stare, once or twice; but it was no longer the same stare as before;—it was less contemptuous—more ill-natured. Helen rejoiced, and went to bed, happy.



RIVALRY—A FRIENDLY WARNING—TEMPTATION.

JOHN received Helen's letters with a feeling of vague disappointment. There were none of the outpourings of the heart, that he had expected; none of the longings after home, no hints of the dear and wished-for time on which *his* thoughts dwelt—how incessantly! His mother noticed the cloud upon his brow, and marked the half-suppressed sigh, and the frequent abstraction; and attributed all to the right cause—Helen's fickleness. One day, after twice speaking to him without receiving an answer, she rose, and, passing her arm around him, gently kissed his brow. Her mute sympathy was more expressive than mere words would have been; he laid his head upon her shoulder, as he had been wont to do when a child.

"She is so very young, and so pretty, my dear!" said his mother.

He sighed heavily.

"But she loves you well, I am sure," she continued.

"Yes; if I doubted that for one instant, I would release her—at least, I hope so."

"Then why are you so sad, dear John?"

He hesitated.—"I miss her. I feel as if half my being had been taken from me when she left!"

"Ah, John! but there is more than that!"

He started.

"Yes, my dear son. Her letters are not what you expected.

They are wanting in warmth, and in interest in yourself! —Is it not so? Does she not dwell more upon the novelty and pleasure of her position, than upon her regret at your absence?"

"Bless her! Bless her! I am a selfish wretch!—and she is all that is true and good!" burst from him in broken accents; and he abruptly left the room.

"Poor fellow!" sighed his mother; "I wish you would write to her, Lucy my dear, and mention that John seems unhappy. It may do some good."

So Lucy wrote. The letter reached Helen, just as she was equipping for a picnic. She was in high spirits; for Mrs. Huntingdon had freshly arrayed her from head to foot, and not even the fastidious Arthur could detect one flaw in her appearance. When Lucy's letter was handed to her, a picture arose before her of her humble home, so unlike this brilliant and fascinating abode; of all the miserable shifts and contrivances to which they had been obliged to have recourse; — the badly-cleaned, badly-fitting gloves — the patched boots—the shabby dresses and bonnets: and she threw Lucy's letter into a drawer, intending to read it on her return.

The picnic went off delightfully. Arthur was her inseparable companion; to the evident discomfiture of Miss Atherton, whose sleepy glances failed to meet their response. Lord Clifton, too, evidently admired her; but Mrs. Grey knew that he was poor, and could not afford to marry a portionless young lady, however charming she might be: she therefore instructed Helen, "not to make herself at all *particular* with him;" and he accordingly turned over his attention to pretty little Kate Willingham.

They returned home late; and Helen was so tired, that she was glad to get to bed, though she had for some days owed John a letter, and ought to have written to him that night. Thus, Lucy's missive was forgotten; and Helen's sleep, instead of being peopled with visions of the green lawn, and the seat under the elm-tree, and of the one who used to sit there beside her, was filled with picnics, balls, dress, and fashionable gentlemen clad in faultless attire, possessing light moustaches, quick blue eyes, and a very fascinating smile.

Ten days had now passed since her arrival ; and Helen had become quite accustomed to her new position, and able to cope with any Miss Atherton in the world.

It was a rainy day, and everyone was out of humour ;—everyone, except the plain Miss Willingham, who sat in a quiet corner, deeply absorbed in a book. Little Kate was put out, because Lord Clifton was consumed with yawns, and *would* keep looking out of the window and wishing the rain would cease. Mrs. Marsh was annoyed, because her husband had taken a seat near her, and was persisting in a series of lover-like attentions, under the supposition that she had a head-ache. Miss Atherton was in an exceedingly bad temper, because Arthur was devoting himself to Helen, and also, because one or two ill-natured and heavy remarks of hers, had met with sharp and clever retorts from that young lady. Mrs. Grey was put out, because, in trying to reduce her waist to wasp-like proportions, she had effected the undesirable accompaniment of a red-hot nose, at which Mrs. Atherton (who was out of temper always) stared incessantly, and in a most insulting and unfeeling manner.

In short, no one was amiable ; and Messrs. Ponsonby and Rexford, instead of trying to amuse the ladies of the party, strolled about, making disagreeable comments, interspersed with yawns.

Perhaps no one was in worse temper than Helen herself ; for she was troubled with a complaint most dangerous to equanimity of mind,—self-reproach. Every day had she been mentally excusing herself for not writing to John, on the plea that “something or other was always going on—she never had a moment to herself !” But to day there was no such excuse ; and she felt, that, instead of sitting in that corner, receiving Mr. Huntingdon’s gentle words and looks, she ought to be at her writing desk. But, in the first place, she did not feel in a Brockley mood ; in the next, she dared not leave Miss Atherton with Mr. Huntingdon. So she stayed there.

“Oh ! hang it ! we must do something !” yawned Mr. Rexford. “Miss Grey, do suggest something ! You are generally the life and soul of us all ; but to-day, you seem to share the general apathy !”

"I have, for some time past, thought of suggesting *one* resource to you and Mr. Ponsonby——"

"And what is that?"

"Bed."

He laughed.—"Well, I believe you are about right.—But that wouldn't do—we should lie awake to-night. Now what shall we do? Suppose we try those letters, again;—making words?"

The letters were accordingly produced. Miss Atherton, with (for her) a wonderful attempt at animation, pounced on them, and, after a quarter of an hour's study, handed an Italian word to Helen, saying,—

"I think you will find that, a rather difficult one.—It is *Italian*."

Helen did not understand Italian; and knew, by the gleam in Miss Atherton's eye, that she was aware of the fact. She coloured, but took the word; and then, handed another to her tormentor, saying,—

"And here is an English one—a Rowland for your Oliver! You will try very hard to accomplish it; but I doubt whether you will succeed!"

The gentlemen saw that some hidden meaning lay beneath her words; and crowded round Miss Atherton, to help her in finding it out. The letters were,—R. M. E. I. G. A. A. R.

Meanwhile, Helen whispered to Mrs. Huntingdon,—

"Help me—do! I'm not a blue-stocking, and always hated learning; and I don't know one word of Italian!"

Her companion smiled, and made out the word, which Helen carried in triumph to Miss Atherton.

"What?" she said, leaning over the young lady, "you have not accomplished it yet?—Then I fear you never will!"

"I see it!" exclaimed Mr. Ponsonby; and he immediately formed the letters into the word, "Marriage."

"Too bad of you!" whispered Mr. Rexford to Helen; while Lord Clifton, who had lounged up to the spot, added, "She will never forgive you!"

Miss Atherton crimsoned; for she understood Helen's "Rowland for an Oliver."

"I think it a stupid game, after all," said Mr. Huntingdon.

"You can't get a word out of people, while they are brooding over these letters! Suppose we adjourn to the Billiard-room?"

Thither they accordingly went. Helen had been taking lessons in billiards from Mr. Huntingdon; and showed herself so apt a pupil, that she already disdained the mace, and was becoming versed in all the mysteries of cannons, &c., while Miss Atherton, who was well used to the game, failed signally in her attempts. At last, relinquishing her mace, she said,—

"I don't think billiards a game for ladies; I should feel ashamed of being able to play well at it."

"Would you?" said Helen. "Now, I should feel proud of being able to play well;—and I mean to practice."

"If a lady choose to throw herself into inelegant attitudes," pursued the other, "it is no doubt easy to make good strokes. All that is needed, is assurance."

"'Boldness'—you would say!" interposed Helen; "but I don't agree with you. I think the game requires a slight, active figure, and a quick eye." (Two qualities which Miss Atherton did not possess!)

"Never mind sparring at Miss Atherton," whispered Mr. Huntingdon; "but come into the library."

She consented; but on the way, she stopped irresolutely.—

"I really ought to write a letter."

"Oh! never mind;—let it wait."

"But I have already let it wait longer than I ought to have done."

"Therefore, an hour or two longer can make little difference," he urged. "Don't go—there's a darling!"

He had lately fallen into a habit of addressing her by such titles of endearment. She ought to have checked him; but she did not. She went on a few steps; but her conscience smote her, and she made a further effort to do what was right.

"I really *must* go," she said; "but it wants only two hours to dinner, so that you will see me again soon—the parting will not be for ever!"

"Heaven forbid!" he ejaculated, with an earnestness that made her feel as if she were doing wrong to be there with him.

"But don't go!" he pleaded. "I don't want to have to do the agreeable to your friend Miss Atherton during your absence."

A random shot; but it told, wonderfully!

"Well, as it is so near dinner-time," she replied, "I should not be able to write a long letter; so I may as well waste an hour with you."

They entered the library; where they were soon busily engaged in looking over some sketches of Italian scenery. At last they came to a view near Tivoli;—a woodland scene, where two lovers were seated in the foreground, under a tree, seemingly thinking more of each other than of the glorious prospect spread around them.

"How beautiful!" he exclaimed. "What infinite grace and tenderness are expressed in her form! How touchingly she seems to cling to, and look up to him, as if he were her world! I could be happy in such a place, with so sweet a companion!—Helen, suppose you were that girl,—who, of all whom you have ever met, would seem your most congenial companion, in that scene of enchantment?"

Strange, that her thoughts reverted not to the absent one!

"You are silent," he continued. "Now, I should know whom to name, if you asked me that question!"

She did not ask it. Rising, she said that she was sure it was almost dinner-time; and then, at last, she went to her own room.

She could not understand the flutter at her heart, nor the troubled thoughts that crowded through her brain. She only knew, that she felt very perplexed and uneasy. She made a faint attempt to analyse her feelings; but shrank from the test. Impatiently, she rang the bell for Marty.

"And what'll you put on to day, my dear?"

"I don't care.—Anything."

"Your grey silk?"

"Of course not! You grow more stupid and slow, every day, Marty!"

A shadow, which had lately been stealing over the face of the faithful servant, deepened; but she said nothing.

"Oh! how clumsy you are!" was Helen's next impatient ejaculation. "You scratched me with that hook! Your

great fingers are not fit to do anything but scrub and scour ! Why—what *are* you doing with my scent?—You are *spilling* it on my neck !” she fretfully added, as some drops fell upon her.

Still Marty was silent ; so Helen looked up.

“ Oh ! Marty, Marty ! my dear, good friend !—You may forgive me ; but I can’t forgive myself !” And she passionately kissed and fondled the rough hand that she had so lately condemned. “ Dear Marty, don’t cry !” (for the drops upon her neck had been Marty’s tears.) “ You won’t mind what I say ? You know I don’t mean it ! I am wretched, Marty—wretched ! I am doing wrong ; and I am dissatisfied with myself, for I am growing worldly, and selfish, and deceitful !—And now, I have been ungrateful to *you*. Oh ! don’t think more of it dear Marty ! and don’t think *very* badly of me, for it !”

“ And why ain’t you happy, my dear ? Hasn’t Mr. John wrote so often as he had ought ?”

“ Yes Marty—oh yes ! John is—is—I wish I—I were one thousandth part as good as he is !”

“ I wish we were home again !” sighed Marty.

Helen made no reply ;—she could not echo Marty’s wish. She shrank from the thought of home, and of —

“ Give me a handkerchief out of that drawer, Marty dear ; and I will go down stairs.”

“ Why, here’s Miss Lucy’s letter, just as you threw it in !” exclaimed Marty, handing it to her. “ It come near a fortnight ago, didn’t it ?”

With bitter self-reproach, Helen received her friend’s missive, and, dismissing her attendant, prepared to read it. How her heart smote her as she did so ! It ran thus :—

“ I ought to be angry with you, darling Helen, for neglecting me as you have done, and I felt half inclined not to write to you at all ; but I am sure you will be glad I have done so, when you learn the purport of my letter.—My dear brother is evidently in wretched spirits ; and I fear that you are the cause of his unhappiness. You have written to him twice only ; and I fear that your letters are not only short and hurried, but deficient in warmth of expression ; for they seem to give him pain, rather than pleasure. He looked

forward to them so anxiously, poor fellow! and received them with such painful eagerness!—Oh! if you could have seen him! He carried them away to read, and did not return for a long time; and then he was very quiet, and we could see that his heart was heavy. Helen, can you bear to grieve him so? No, I am sure that you will take this hint, and write him such a letter as will make amends for the others. Poor John! every morning, we can see that he is awaiting the arrival of the post, with irrepressible impatience; and when there is no letter for him, a sad look comes over his face—*such a sad look* Helen! it makes my heart ache to see it. Mamma is very anxious about him; and it is at her wish that I write to you. Need I say more?

“Good-bye, dear Helen,

“Your sincere friend,

LUCY.”

Helen's mind was made up. She would retire to her room early that night, and write to John. Meanwhile, she would keep a strict guard over her words and actions;—as strict a guard as though he were present. In this mood, she went down stairs.

She found Mr. Huntingdon seated beside Miss Atherton. He was in high—almost wild—spirits, and did not notice her entrance. A momentary pang of jealousy shot through her heart; but she repelled it. She thought of John—of all that Lucy had been telling her; and she felt no inclination for Mr. Huntingdon's society—especially in his present mood.

Dinner was announced, and she was taken down to dinner by Lord Clifton; slightly to the discomfiture of little Kate, who, however, soon found consolation in flirting with Mr. Rexford. Helen returned abstracted answers to her companion's talk, and was so quiet and depressed, that more than one person noticed the change, and ascribed it to a cause very different from the true one.

When they returned to the drawing-room, she sat down by herself, feigning to be absorbed in a book. But the words passed before her eyes without stamping their impression on her brain. She was trying to understand her own feelings; for they were a mystery to her.

“Why,” she asked herself, “do I feel so hopelessly sad—

as though the brightest part of my life had passed away—as if my dearest aims in life were crushed, and only a blank remained? Is it because I have acted ungratefully—deceitfully—by him? But I can write to him this night, and all will be well.”

Still, her sadness remained. Her mother noticed it, and sat down by her side.

“Helen,” she whispered, “do make some effort to conceal your mortification. Everyone can see it; and that red-haired girl is triumphing.”

“Is she?” Helen quickly exclaimed.

“She need not; for *she* has nothing to do with my being out of spirits.”

“Have you and Mr. Huntingdon quarrelled?”

“No mamma—of course not!—But I am unhappy, because I have been neglecting the one person who loves me better than all the world;—and he feels it.”

“How do you know that he does?”

“By a letter from Lucy.”

“Indeed! Well, Helen, I must say, that I think it very indelicate, in a child, like Lucy, to interfere in such matters.”

“Mamma, you forget!—Lucy is a month older than I am!”

“True; but she is so awkward and unformed, that one forgets her age.—But Helen, I am not quite so sure that John loves you so very desperately. At least, I am sure there is another who loves you quite as well;—one, whose splendid advantages of face, figure, and fortune, (those three very desirable f's) render him a far more eligible person.”

“You mean, Mr.” —

“Hush, my dear! do not even whisper his name!—Yes, I do mean him.”

“Well, to tell the truth mamma, if I were not already engaged—”

“As if that had anything to do with it, my dear!”

“What do you mean, mamma?”

“Why, love, you would not be so dishonorable as to continue your engagement after you had learnt to prefer another?”

Helen bestowed on her mother a glance of agonised entreaty. Mrs. Grey resumed:—

"I believe, Helen, that you *have* some such dishonorable intention! I *know* that you prefer Mr. Huntingdon to John!"

"Oh! no, no!—I love John—indeed I do!"

"Yes, of course, in a certain way;—just as *I* love him! He is very good, and quiet, and steady. He is not fascinating; nor is he of fashionable, or even refined, exterior. He is ten years older than you, and of totally different tastes and habits."

"Mamma, you did not think all this a few months ago!"

"My dear, I yielded to circumstances.—Of the three Brockley single men, he was the least objectionable. I thought it necessary for you to marry; and was glad when you accepted him, instead of one of the others. But, who could have foreseen that this brilliant chance was in store for you? There was then every probability of our passing our lives in Brockley. But, beyond all this, I can now see how terribly common all the Brockleyites were. Depend upon it, dear, if you could see John now, you would wonder how you could ever have fancied yourself in love with him."

"Mamma! mamma! you must not say that!—I must not listen to you! It seems so shocking!"

"Truth is often shocking, my love," replied Mrs. Grey, in a tone of lofty morality. "But I have warned you; and if you hesitate in making John aware of your changed feelings, you will not be acting up to *my* notion of honour!"

"But mamma—the idea of breaking it off now!"

"My dear child, will you never cast aside those rustic notions? Why, every girl in society is engaged half-a-dozen times, before the right man turns up! As to breaking off an engagement, nothing is thought of it, any more than of changing a pair of gloves!—But here comes Mr. Huntingdon. Now, whatever you may feel, do not, I beseech you, let that girl triumph! Do not make yourself the laughing-stock of the place!"

Mr. Huntingdon, however, did not appear to notice Helen. He at once joined Miss Atherton; whose triumphant glance at Helen, served to finish what her mother's words had begun. All her good resolutions melted away. Whatever it might cost, she determined to defeat her rival.

Mr. Huntingdon's manner, this evening, was very strange;

he seemed in the wildest spirits, and laughed and talked in a way that excited the notice of all. At last his mother, as on a former occasion, interposed; and before long, he resumed his old station beside Helen. Though she felt terribly annoyed at her rival's temporary victory, she could not help attributing it partly to her own slight discouragement of Mr. Huntingdon that morning.

"It will not do," she thought. "If I am cold to him, he will turn to her; and she shall not think she has supplanted me—no, that she shall not! When she has left, I will withdraw from Mr. Huntingdon's society. Till then, I will keep him from her."

"However, her companion did not remain long with her. After continuing to talk in the same excited strain for a little while, he exclaimed,—

"How close the room feels! I long to be in the open air! I should like to become the sport of the winds, and be whirled aloft through space;—or to ride upon a huge wave, big enough to entomb a universe!"

She shrank from him; for there was something in his manner, that filled her with dread. He left her; and in another moment, she saw him running swiftly across the lawn, leaping over every impediment in his way. She fell into a reverie, from which she was aroused by the voice of Grace Willingham. Though Grace was plain, and unaccomplished, she possessed "that most excellent thing in woman," a low sweet voice.

"Are you not well to-night?"

Helen looked up quickly. She felt inclined to resent the proffered sympathy; but, one glance at the soft, feeling eyes, told her that no prying curiosity prompted the question. She answered, with a sigh, that her head ached a little. Her friend resumed:—

"Go to your room, and lie down; and," she hesitatingly added, "if you will allow me, I will accompany you; for I have something to say."

"Come, then," replied Helen, with a grateful smile.

As soon as they were alone, Grace resumed:—

"I have been watching you, with more anxiety and dread than you can imagine; for I think, that unless some one act

as your friend now, you will be paving your future path with misery!"

Helen started. Did Grace know of her engagement?

The other continued:—

"Pray don't be offended with me, or think that I am taking too much upon myself! I have waited until now, in the hope that his mother would warn you; but she does not; nay, I think she is desirous of your union with him——"

"But tell me," asked Helen, in utter amazement, yet still thinking that Grace referred to her engagement with John; "tell me—of whom do you speak?"

"Of my cousin Arthur. I have known him from childhood; and I warn you—I entreat you, by all your hopes of happiness in this world—not to marry him! If you have unfortunately become fascinated by him, avoid him—quit this house!"

"But why?—why?" gasped Helen.

"I cannot tell you more. I should be much blamed by my parents, if they knew I had spoken even thus much of one of the family—especially while staying under this roof. But I again repeat, that a union with Arthur would entail upon you utter and hopeless misery?"

"But I have no thought of marrying him!"

"Then why do you encourage his very evident admiration?"

"Because I hate that Miss Atherton! I do it, to spite her!"

"Oh! my dear child, do not indulge such feelings! They are enough to provoke a judgment from the Almighty! How can you read your Bible, and talk thus?"

Helen looked confused,—she had not opened her Bible since she had left home! Grace continued:—

"And, as to disliking Miss Atherton, or being determined to prevent her attracting Arthur, she would deserve your most sincere pity if she succeeded. Whoever marries him will be wretched! Have you not noticed his strange manner this evening? Did you not observe his mother's terrible anxiety?"

"I think I know what you mean," Helen answered. "I had a faint suspicion of the truth; but I banished it directly—it seemed too shocking!"

"You will excuse my frankness?" asked Grace, as she rose to leave; "I am ten years your senior—quite an old woman, compared with you! And it went to my heart, to see you, as I thought, laying up for yourself such a store of misery.—And I can see that Mrs. Huntingdon is ready to sacrifice you."

"But," interrupted Helen, "she does it through kindness. She thinks her son perfection;—and what other motive could she have, but kindness, for wishing him to marry me—without a farthing?"

"I cannot imagine—unless she thinks he would be more settled, if married. But, that she *has* a motive, I feel convinced. Mrs. Huntingdon never acts from *impulse*; she weighs the consequences of all that she does.—But, tea must be ready by this time;—we had better go down-stairs."

Mr. Huntingdon had not returned; at which Helen felt relieved; for she was still resolved that Miss Atherton should not have him. The evening passed rather wearily; and Helen retired early to her room. She resolutely took out her desk, adjusted her writing materials, and prepared to begin John's letter. But her thoughts would not flow. Alas! her *heart* was not in that letter. They dwelt mournfully upon Grace's communication; and her words still rang harshly upon her memory;—"If you have unhappily become fascinated by him, avoid him!"

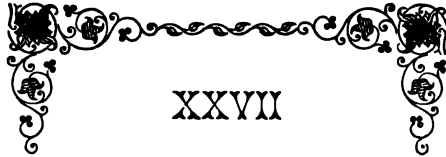
To avoid him!

That thought called forth an answer, which smote, trumpet-like, upon her conscience—searing and scorching with its fiery brand.—"Avoid him? Nay, I would rather die!"

And then recurred to her, her parting words to John,—"*I will be true to you, in thought, word, and deed;—as true, as though you were present, and could read my heart!*" That promise—how it stabbed her to the quick! How she wished she had never made it, or that she had never left that good and upright being!

Sadly, she laid down the pen. She could not then write to John!

And so, she wept herself to sleep.



TROUBLE.

ANOTHER week passed by. Helen and Arthur were inseparable. She had half succeeded in stifling the voice of conscience; but, now and then, it *would* make itself heard; and her sufferings, at such times, were great. Sometimes she thought of entreating her mamma to return to Brockley; but the thought of leaving Staniswood was becoming each day more insupportable. Day by day her resolution grew weaker; till, at last, she said to herself,—

“It is better that I should see it in its true light.—I love him! As long as I am here, I will be happy, and make him happy too. Before long I shall return to Brockley. I will keep my promise to John—I will marry him. I did not promise always to love him—how could I?—or what woman could promise that her feelings would never change? I engaged to *marry* him; and I will keep my word!”

Grace still watched Helen with sorrowful anxiety. She made one more effort in her behalf, but, seeing that it would be useless, abandoned the attempt in despair.

It was now six weeks since the Grey's had left Brockley. Yet still, no one talked of departure; or, if Mrs. Grey did now and then make a show of attempting to leave, it was overruled by Mrs. Huntingdon.

Meanwhile, darker and darker grew the cloud on John's brow. He was becoming silent and moody, took long walks, and sat little with his mother and sister. When they ven-

tured on any expression of their sympathy, he would answer with an impatient "Pshaw!" or else, leave the room. They noticed, that he generally absented himself when the post was expected to arrive; and if he happened to be in the room when the letters were delivered, he never looked up, nor betrayed the least anxiety for the long-expected missive. At last, however, it came.

The few words,—“For Mr. John,” threw him off his guard. He darted forward, seized the letter, and hurried out of the room.

After awhile, they heard him slowly coming back.

“Poor fellow!” said his mother. “I know he is disappointed again! How heavily and slowly he treads!”

John entered, and quietly took his accustomed seat. His mother glanced at him; and then clasped him in her arms.

“Oh! John—John!”

The ice was broken. His head fell upon her bosom; and groan after groan burst from him.

“Let me see her letter, my dear; perhaps *I* may not think it so cold.”

His hand trembled violently, as he gave her the letter. She read:—

“I don’t know what apology to make, my dear John, for my long silence; so I think I had better throw myself at once on the mercy of the Court, pleading guilty to having been so incessantly occupied, and hurried, and in a whirl, as to have had not one moment’s time for thought—much less, for writing. This is how the day is spent.—We have breakfast any time between ten and eleven. Then we talk, or saunter in the garden (kill time somehow) until two, when we have lunch; after which, we drive, ride, visit, or go picnicing, or botanizing, till about six. At seven, we dine. After dinner everyone subsides into a state of *coma* until tea-time; and when tea is over, all sorts of diversions go on. Sometimes we have company; sometimes we go out—for this is a very social neighbourhood. And oh! what *do* you think, John?—we are going to have some private theatricals! the play is to be “Money;” and I am to be Clara. Miss Atherton tried hard for the part, but I was determined to disappoint her. It is so delightful—I mean, the rehearsing. I can think of nothing

else, just now. Mrs. Huntingdon is sparing no expense in getting up the theatre; and she has invited a very large audience. It is the talk of the whole county. Dear me! it is time for rehearsal—and I have not said half that I had to say to you; but I will write to you again soon. Give my kindest love to your mamma and Lucy, and believe me, dear John,

“Yours affectionately,

“HELEN.”

“Well, mother?”

“She is not worthy of you!”

He clasped his hands entreatingly.

“Aye, I know that it is very bitter to you, my poor child; but it must be done.—You must give her up!”

“I cannot mother! I cannot!”

“John, you are very weak!”

“I know it. I always was—with her!”

“Then, be strong now. Let her not despise you.”

He started. “Despise me! no, she cannot do that!”

“What must she think of a man, who can allow himself to be treated as she treats you?”

“Think of him?—Why,—that he loves her, as he *ought* to love the woman he intends to make his wife!—Loves, and—and *trusts* her!”

He spoke the last two words falteringly; and his glance fell before his mother's earnest eyes.

“No John—don't deceive yourself!—you do *not* trust her! You *love* her, to madness! She knows it; and if that knowledge has failed to dictate such a letter as you have the right to expect, the sooner you have done with her, the better. Her head is quite turned, by the sudden novelty and splendour of her position.—Then, how can you approve of a young girl of seventeen acting before a large audience? How can you bear the idea of your affianced bride submitting to all the familiarities, that are indispensable towards supporting the character of a theatrical lover?”

“No,” he impetuously exclaimed; “she shall not engage in those cursed theatricals! I could not again look upon her as possessing the same innocence and purity, if she did!”

“How will you prevent her?”

“I will write to her, express my strong repugnance to it, and beg her, for *my* sake, not to engage in it.”

"And you think she will listen to you?"

"Yes."

"Poor John!"

He coloured with vexation; but he wrote the letter, and then felt easier. A few days later, his mother renewed the subject, and in a way he little expected.

"I think, John," she began, "that I judged Helen rather too severely. She has, naturally, a warm and generous heart; but her mother's counsels have, no doubt, for a time, stifled its emotions. She is young, too; and it is no wonder, if she is a little dazzled by her sudden entrance into that which must to her appear almost a realm of enchantment. Besides, she is exquisitely pretty, and is, no doubt, receiving a great deal of admiration. Poor child! I wish she were back again!"

"My dear mother!"

"Now, John, I have a plan. You know how often the Harwoods have invited you to stay with them. I wish you would accept their invitation,—at all events, for a week. They live within a few miles of Staniswood; and you could run over to see Helen, without seeming to have followed her thither."

John pondered his mother's words.

"I don't know, mother," he said, very thoughtfully.

"Might it not look, as if I could not trust her?"

His mother smiled.

"That is not *uppermost* in your thoughts!"

"What is, then?"

"Pride, my dear—pride! You are too proud, to show Helen that you care for her more than she does for you, and that you cannot keep away from her. Ah John! your pride will be your bane."

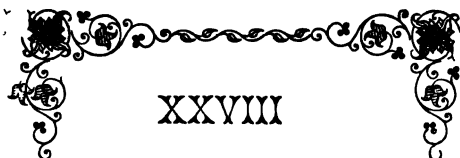
He felt that she was right; yet he could not bring himself entirely to cast away his cherished failing. His mother, however, continued to urge him.

"Do go, my dear! I think that one quiet talk with Helen would renew all her affection, and make her long to return home."

She spoke truly. Helen often thought of her home, and bitterly regretted having left it; and at times, she wished that something would happen to recall her to it, and to her duty.

Had John met her when she was in such a mood, all would have been well, and years of misery would have been spared them. Alas! they both felt that the sun of their life was obscured; but they could not see—they little knew—how thick and black were the clouds that were piling themselves before it. The darkness of their sky boded a hurricane; while they anticipated naught but a summer-shower!

At last, John decided on a middle course. He would go to the Harwoods'; through whom, he would probably hear something of the goings on at Staniswood. After that, he could be guided by circumstances. Having come to this decision, he felt somewhat relieved, and looked more cheerful than he had done for a long while.



JOHN'S LETTER.

EVERYONE wondered that Helen did not come down to breakfast; at last, her mother went to her room to seek her.

Helen was weeping over John's letter. As her mother entered the room, she made an effort to hide it; but Mrs. Grey's quick eyes were too much for her.

"My dearest love, why do you not come down-stairs?"

"I forgot it was breakfast-time," Helen replied, in a sadly wearied tone. "Oh mamma!" she exclaimed, with passionate vehemence, "how much longer must this go on? How much longer must I play the hypocrite?—false to both, and to myself! Let us—let us return home!"

Her mother was astonished. "My dear child, what can have occasioned this sudden change?—Ah! I know!—You have had a letter from John!"

"I have, mamma; and he is indignant—justly indignant—at my conduct. I have made him unhappy;—and I deserve to be so myself!"

"Shew me the letter, my dear!—Nay, if you cannot trust me with that small mark of confidence, you are, indeed, changed!"

(Flourish of pocket-handkerchief—tears, ahoy!)

"There mamma—take it; and don't reproach me, for I am very, very miserable!"

And, leaning her face on the arm of her chair, she wept.

"My dear Helen, don't—pray don't! You will make yourself a fright; and Miss Atherton will be pleased!"

"I don't care!—If I had not been envious and jealous, I should not have cared about attracting Mr. Huntingdon; and I should not have made John unhappy.—I should not have learnt to despise myself! I hated Miss Atherton; and therefore tried to draw Arthur"—she checked herself—"Mr. Huntingdon—away from her. And now——"

"Now, you *love* Arthur Huntingdon; and therefore you cannot endure the thought of marrying John!"

"Oh! don't say that, mamma!—don't!—It seems so horrible—so unnatural!—Besides, I am not quite sure whether I should not prefer John, if he were in Mr. Huntingdon's position. I——"

"Helen do not deceive yourself! You *love* Mr. Huntingdon;—you feel nothing but friendship for John! If you marry him, you will be acting dishonorably; and you will neither make him happy, nor be so yourself! When you accepted John, you had met no one else;—he was your *beau-ideal* of refinement and elegance, and you fancied you must be in love with him. But now that you have met with one, in every way more calculated to make you happy, your heart tells you that you *now* love for the first time! For John, you feel esteem and friendship;—for Arthur, you feel—*love*! Come, let us go down-stairs."

Helen obeyed. For the first time, her manner towards Mr. Huntingdon was painfully confused; and she blushed frequently. After breakfast, some of the party strolled out; but Mrs. Grey beckoned her friend to her room, and produced John's letter.

"That poor child is quite upset by it," sighed the amiable Maria.

"Allow me to read it," urged Letitia.

"Pray do so—and aloud. I have not yet had time for a perusal."

Mrs. Huntingdon complied.

"MY DEAREST HELEN,—A serious estrangement may often be avoided by a little candour in little things. I will therefore speak to you from my heart; and I trust you will take what I say, in the spirit in which it is intended, and not think me harsh, over-strict, or dictatorial.

"You have made me very unhappy, my dear! During the

six weeks of your absence, you have written to me three times only;—three times, Helen, when it should have been *twelve*! Your letters have been hurried, and, for all the assurance of your affection contained in them, might as well have been written to anyone else. What is it to *me*, whether the gay company at Staniswood walk, ride, or drive? What, to me, whether Lord Clifton admires Miss—Jones, or Smith, (or whatever her name may be) or any other person? *I* want to hear about Helen Grey—of every thought that passes through her heart;—and I am disappointed. But more than all, Helen, is the idea of these theatricals repugnant to me. I cannot bear to dwell upon it;—I cannot bear that my affianced wife should be subjected to all the familiarities entailed by her engaging in them. Could I be present at the performance, and witness but one caress (even though it were only *acted*) received by you, I could never again fancy you the same pure unsullied being as before. I beseech you, for *my* sake, abandon the idea. How could you ever have contemplated appearing before a large audience—becoming the centre of observation to all?—you, so young—so inexperienced! But I am sure I need say no more;—for *my* sake you will give it up. When—*when* are you coming back? I am tired of expecting you. You must, I am sure, long to see Brockley again. Write to me, dearest; you cannot think how I long to hear from you. You have been led away a little,—poor dear child!—by the pleasures and amusements by which you are surrounded;—but it is very natural—and you are so young and pretty. I must stop now, to save this post; so farewell, my dearest Helen.”

“About as coolly impertinent a note, as he could well have written!” ejaculated Mrs. Huntingdon.

“Do you think so?” asked her friend. “Well, I must confess, it does not strike me as being so!”

“Ah! but you are somewhat prejudiced in the writer’s favour!”

“No, not in the least, I assure you my love. But, tell me—which part of the letter do you consider objectionable?”

“The whole, my dear Maria. In the first place, he threatens her with a rupture of the engagement! Could anything be more insulting than that?”

"Does he, indeed?—I did not notice that!"

"You are too trusting, my dear Maria; far too trusting and unsuspicious! Now, just look at the beginning of the letter.—'A serious estrangement,' etc."

"Of course—of course. How could I be so dull?" murmured Mrs. Grey. "But, what am I to do? Helen is so much affected by this letter, that she has positively begged me to return to Brockley!"

"Not to be thought of, for one moment, my dearest friend!—unless, indeed, Helen is sincerely attached to this rustic swain,—which I cannot believe to be the case. I think, that, if she were compelled to choose between him and Lord Clifton, the latter would win the day."

"Well, Letitia, I *have* noticed that Lord Clifton and she are very good friends. But I am not ambitious; and if Helen prefers John, she shall marry him. I only wish to see her united to one who will make her happy."

How these two ladies were playing into each other's hands! They were both perfectly aware that Lord Clifton had no thought of Helen, nor she of him. Mrs. Huntingdon considered for a moment, and then resumed:—

"Let *me* manage this, my dear friend. I will talk to Helen; and I have little doubt that I shall be able to convince her."

So saying, she sought Helen; whom she found, arguing very earnestly, with Mr. Huntingdon and the others.

"I cannot—indeed I cannot!" she was saying.

"But it is too late now;—the whole thing would have to be given up!" remonstrated Mr. Huntingdon.

"No," argued Helen; "Miss Atherton would be my substitute, I dare say."

"Margaret is very quick at learning a part," put in Atherton *mère*.

"What is the bone of contention?" asked Mrs. Huntingdon, advancing with her sunny smile.

"This:—Miss Grey, after studying her part, and rehearsing it, suddenly, and without any apparent cause, declares that she will not act!" said Arthur.

"But, what reason does she give?"

"None;—that's the worst of it. I don't believe she *has* a reason. It is sheer feminine caprice!" he replied, half laughingly, though he was much vexed.

"My dear Helen, is it possible?" enquired Mrs. Huntingdon, in a voice of gentle reproach.

Helen was sorry to have vexed her friend, who had great influence over her. She answered, very gently:—

"Indeed, I am not acting from caprice; but, from the conviction that I am in the right."

"Going to turn mentor—eh, my dear?" asked Mrs. Huntingdon, in a tone of playful sarcasm.

Helen could not endure ridicule. She coloured deeply.

"Come with me, my dear. You will not refuse to tell *me* your reasons. I am sure you are influenced by a notion of what you *believe* to be right; but you may be mistaken."

As soon as they had gained Helen's room, she asked:—

"Now dear, what is the matter?—But I need not ask;—I have seen Mr. Howard's letter."

"Then surely you would not advise me to join these theatricals?"

Mrs. Huntingdon paused, and reflected for a few moments.

"My dear child, I fear that what I am going to say may not be taken in good part—"

"Oh! yes, yes! Tell me the truth, whatever it may be!"

"Dearest—I cannot bear to tell people of their faults;—still less, one whom I love as I do you, my child. But I am sure you know that I seek your good alone?"

"I do, indeed."

"Then I must tell you, my dear Helen, that I am much grieved and disappointed, to observe in your character a sad want of proper pride and feminine dignity."

"Oh! why?—in what way?"

"My dear, I wonder how you can ask the question! Any young lady who tamely allows a man to threaten to jilt her, and submits to any conditions, for the sake of warding off that undesirable event, is sadly wanting in self-respect."

Helen's spirit rose in arms.—

"He has *not* done so!" she vehemently exclaimed; "nor would I bear it—as you know!"

"Be calm Helen. Perhaps I may have been a little mistaken, after all. You may not understand the full import of Mr. Howard's letter?"

"What do you suppose it to mean?" asked Helen, in amazement.

"My dear, I read the letter to mean, that if you join in these theatricals, Mr. John Howard will not bestow on you the honor of his hand and heart!—In fact, my dear, I am not quite sure that his letter is not written with a view to break off the engagement—if so it may be called!"

"No," said Helen; "John is incapable of that! He could not do anything mean or underhand!"

Her companion glanced quickly at the girl's flashing eye, and curling lip; but she saw that the speech was not levelled at herself. She replied:—

"My dear Helen, your impetuous temper unfits you for judging so calmly as this matter requires. Listen to me.—If you are offended, I cannot help it;—I shall at all events have done my duty!—When I was at Brockley, I watched Mr. Howard,—as I should have watched anyone, whom you thought of accepting for a husband, my dear child. The result of my scrutiny was (don't be angry, now!) that most of the affection was on *your* side! In society, he seldom approached you; and when he talked with you, there was in his manner a tone of conscious superiority, that I did not like. You submitted to him, my dear, in a way that sometimes made me blush for you—so entirely did you seem to have become subservient to him. At parting, I told him that I should be happy to see him if he ever came in our direction;—a sufficient intimation, that your visit to me need not separate you from him. And has he come? And now, this letter, in which he begins, with threatening to break off the engagement; continues, with blaming you for everything you have done, accusing you of boldness, fretfully repudiating your account of the simple pleasures you have been enjoying; and concludes, with commanding you to break up the plans of amusement formed by your friends. Do you not see, how arrogant is the whole of that letter?—how he relies upon what he thinks your blind, doting affection? Why should you so 'long' to be at Brockley? For *his* dear sake, I suppose! Helen, that letter is degrading to you!"

Helen's brow crimsoned; but she did not speak.

"I believe, my dear," pursued the other, "that this letter is but a *ruse* to break off the engagement; and that if you take a part in the theatricals, he *will* break it off!"

"I don't believe it!"

"Well love, I advise you not to try the experiment, if you are afraid of losing Mr. Howard!"

"I am *not* afraid!"

"I shall not believe it my dear, while you refuse to act."

"I *will* act! I will prove that you are mistaken!"

"Well, take care! for I warn you, that John has laid a trap for you!"

"If so, he will just fall into it himself!" she replied, very angrily, and without knowing what she said.

And this was the result of poor John's letter.



JOHN'S VISIT.

It was the evening before the theatricals—a damp, miserable evening. The rain came drizzling down, as though it partook of the general depression, and had not spirit to pour. Wretched-looking, half-drowned birds sat among the branches, giving an occasional twitter, or now and then languidly shaking their plumage. Sometimes, one would make a temporary skirmish from his retreat, and pounce down upon an unhappy fat slug, or worm, and carry it off, for consumption. Sheep were lying about soaking in the meadow; and cows were huddled together under the trees. A large pool of water had collected before the doorstep of the Harwoods' house; and the yew tree, which sheltered it, contributed its mite towards the general desolation, by slowly, yet incessantly, dropping large tears into the pool. It was a wretched evening.

The Harwood family, consisting of Mr. and Mrs. H., H. junior, and Miss Emma, were assembled, in evident expectation of some arrival; for they constantly appealed to the French clock on the chimney-piece, and now and then went to the door to listen. At last, wheels were heard approaching; and a fly drove up to the door. The whole family, with the exception of Miss Emma, went into the porch, to welcome the new-comer.

"Take care of the pool!" shouted old Harwood, a fine specimen of the genus, John Bull.

"Well, old boy—how are you?" shouted Tom Harwood,

a good-looking fellow, of about twenty-five. "This is my mother—my *celebrated* mother!" he added, with a laugh.

John had often rallied his friend on his devotion to his mother; and had even asserted his belief, that Tom would never marry,—since there could not possibly be another woman in the whole world, to equal her!

Miss Emma was arrayed in her most becoming attire; and a perfect army of blushes were marshalled to greet the visitor; who, however, ungratefully set her down in his own mind for "a little, affected, washed-out thing!"—and then inwardly reproached himself for the same.

The evening was a weary one. Miss Emma said she adored music; whereupon, John, of course, felt himself bound to request a specimen of her performance. Miss Emma bashfully declined, and Mr. John pressed, for ten minutes; at the end of which time, Miss Emma sat down to the piano, and chirped forth various ditties, about blighted hearts, etc. Of course John was delighted; and Miss Emma felt so much encouraged, that she allowed herself to be prevailed on to continue, for another three quarters of an hour.

"It's better than having to talk to her," thought John.

At last, to his inexpressible relief, his friend invited him to adjourn to his room, and "have a weed;" and he took leave of Miss Emma for the night.

After some indifferent conversation, John approached the subject that lay nearest to his heart.

"Do you know a Mrs. Huntingdon, living at a place called Staniswood, about two miles from here?" he asked, in as careless a tone as he could assume.

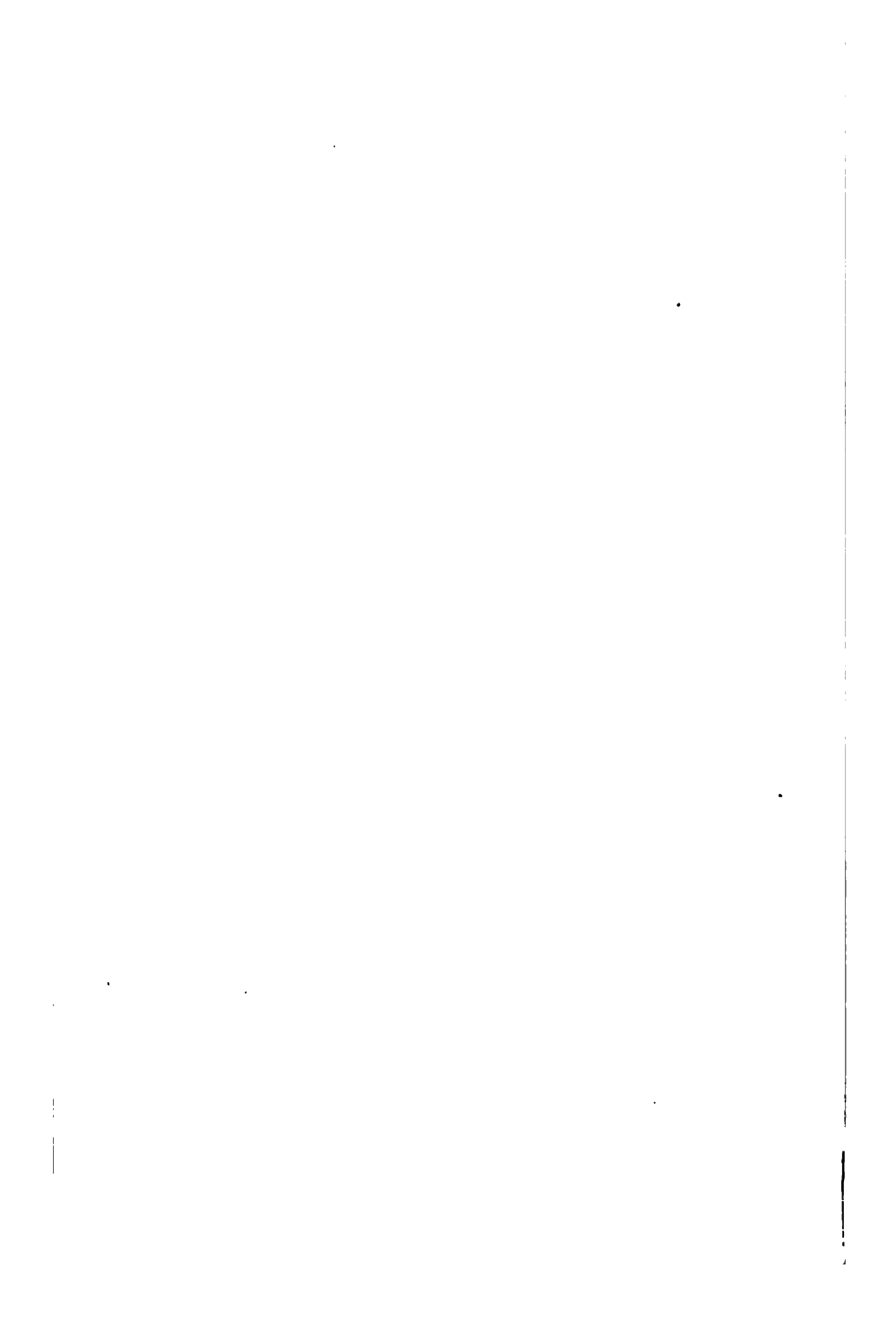
"Slightly. I believe her husband died some years ago. She has come to reside at Staniswood since his death. They used to live at some out-of-the-way place in Wales. No one seems to know much about her antecedents. She is very rich, and of un doubted respectability. Do you know young Huntingdon?"

John started.—"No; nor did I know there was such a person."

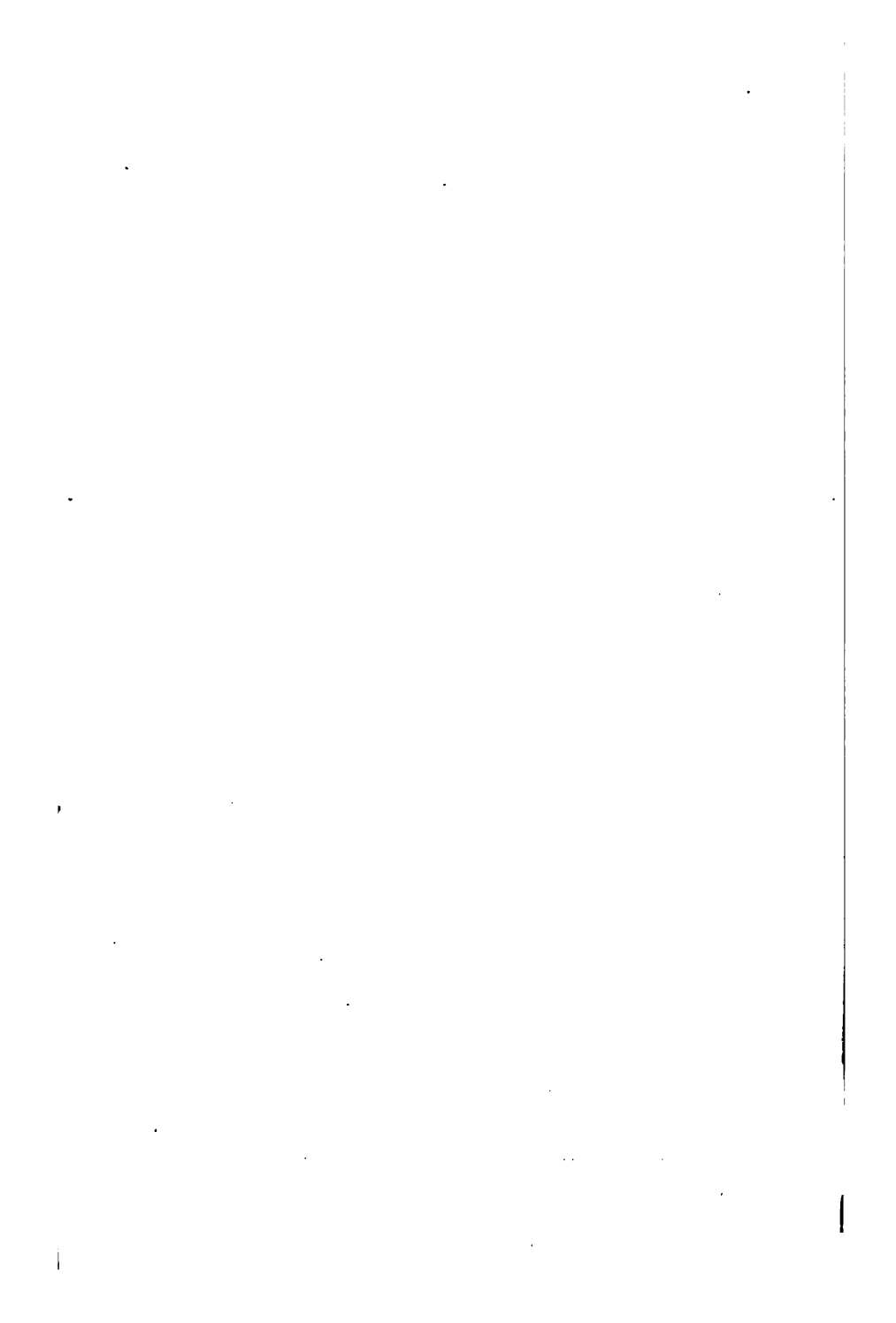
"Ah! he's a fine-looking fellow, clever, and fascinating with the women. They say he drinks."

John's heart was writhing. A terrible suspicion was taking









possession of him. But again he managed to speak in a careless tone ;—

"Mrs. Huntingdon was at Brockley, on a visit to some friends of my mother's. I believe they are now at Staniswood."

"Oh! I daresay you mean the Greys. Mrs. Grey is a little, mincing, fool of a woman. Her daughter is sweetly pretty—quite in the Spanish style; she has splendid eyes and hair, and a rich complexion—and *such* a foot and ankle! It's of no use for any one to admire her, though ;—Huntingdon takes care to let no one approach her!"

"Ah?"

"Yes; I think he's in earnest; and his mother encourages it. Has she money?"

"Not that I know."

"Then I suppose his mother likes the girl;—only, she's not the sort of woman to let herself be carried away by her preferences."

John made no comment. His friend resumed :—

"They are getting up some private theatricals at Staniswood; the whole county will be there. I have a ticket; but don't care to go. I know little of Mrs. Huntingdon, and have met the Greys but once, and then, only at a County Ball. I'll tell you what, old fellow—I wish you'd go in my place!"

"Impossible," said John; "Mrs. Huntingdon knows me, and would be offended at my not calling on her. I don't wish to renew my acquaintance with the lady; as we were not the best friends at Brockley."

"Nonsense! there will be such a crowd, that no one will notice you! Go late; after the performances have commenced; and sit at the back of the platform, which is purposely to be left dark, in order to throw all the light upon the stage. Or, if you don't want the bore of dressing, you need not even go on the platform;—you can look through one side of the green curtain, hung behind it."

"Well," replied John, with apparent cheerfulness, "I confess I should like to know how these things are managed. I have never been present at private theatricals. I think I'll go;—but don't breathe a word of it to anyone."

When he was alone, what emotions of rage and indignation filled his heart! How his pride quivered and heaved, in the

struggle, that drew the scalding tears from his eyes, and the blood from his lip, clenched so tightly between his set teeth, lest his despair should break forth in groans and cries!

"False! False! Never again shall I trust that bright smile—those heartless words! Never—never again!"

But, ere an hour had passed, his mood changed; and his tears were no longer those of wounded pride, but of sorrow and despair.

"She may not be so much to blame," he argued. "If her mother and that woman throw the man in her way, how can she avoid him?"

But then, his memory recalled to him, that Helen was the last person to be driven into anything that was distasteful to her; that she could resolutely—nay, wilfully—assert her own opinion, and, if need were, cling to it. Then again, he argued,—

"Her position is a delicate one. She is receiving this woman's hospitality; and of course, does not like to repulse the son of her hostess. Poor child! I daresay she is puzzled how to act. Her proper course would be, to leave Staniswood. After all, though, it may be mere rumour;—the fellow may mean nothing beyond passing politeness.—People are so fond of talking!"

All this was very well; but would John have argued thus, if he had been less blindly in love with Helen? I think not. He felt that he could not give her up—that it was impossible—he had not strength for it; and he tried to find excuses for his own weakness. It is wonderful, how differently we can bring ourselves to argue on a subject;—how we can contrive to make it square with our own views and wishes.

The next day, John had to dance attendance on Miss Emma; who escorted him through the greenhouse, and then carried him captive into the garden, where he had to admire a pond, and a boat, and a bower, and to listen to the incessant chirping of Miss Emma; till he felt so irritable, that he could have quarrelled with a straw. At last, however, to his intense delight, they went in to lunch; after which meal, Tom Harwood, to his sister's infinite disgust, carried him off for a walk.

"I say," Tom began, "suppose we walk to Staniswood?"

John shrank nervously back.

"We might be seen!"

"Not a bit of it; they are busy enough to-day, preparing for the theatricals. Come along."

When John came in sight of the splendid mansion, approached by a magnificent avenue of oaks, he mentally contrasted it with his own quiet, old-fashioned home; and his heart failed him, for he knew Helen's love of externals. He gazed on the stately terraces, the spreading lawns, the wood beyond; then, back again at the house, with its many windows, and noble architecture. Stifling a sigh, which felt more like a sob, he turned away.

"Why, Howard, how dummy you are!" observed his friend. "I know you were bored to death this morning;—bowers and flowers are not in your line, eh?"

John forced a sickly smile; and tried to protest that he had enjoyed his stroll with Miss Harwood beyond all things.

"But," he added, "I have a nasty, dull head-ache."

"Ah! that's enough to make any fellow dummy," replied his companion. "I daresay dinner will cure it.—Nothing like dinner, for a head-ache!"



THE PLAY.

EVERYONE was in a fever of excitement. The characters were dressed for the play. Marty and Harriet were squabbling and fighting at every turn; for Helen had of late availed herself of Harriet's services far more than was pleasing to Marty, who "couldn't abide the airs and graces of that there stuck-up thing!—no, that she couldn't!"

Some of the actors were yet conning their parts; not so Helen, who was well up in hers, and was, therefore, able to devote all her energies to her *toilette*; and as she consulted her glass when it was completed, she felt satisfied. Marty and Harriet were for once of the same mind; they pronounced her appearance, faultless.

"Not but what I'd rather see you in your lilac muslin, at Brockley, my dear," put in Marty, with a vicious look at Harriet; to which that young lady responded by a glance, which expressed, as plainly as glance *could* express, "Low wretch!"

"Oh! Marty, Marty! you have very vulgar tastes!" said Helen.

The company were already assembled in the theatre. Helen, on descending the stairs, found Mr. Huntingdon (dressed as Evelyn), waiting to escort her; and she entered the "green-room" on his arm. Her heart began to beat; and her courage wavered, at the thought of the large audience.

"I wish it were not too late to draw back! I hope I shall not forget my part!" she sighed.

"Nay," he murmured, in a peculiar tone;—"I shall be with you!"

Again she felt as if she were doing wrong; yet she did not wish those words unsaid.

In a few moments, she was behind the scenes. The curtain had not yet risen; and Mr. Huntingdon led her on to the stage.

"Look through here," he said, pointing to a small hole in the curtain. "Capital audience, eh?"

"Oh! I shall never have courage! I wish I could get out of it!" she exclaimed.

"You foolish little thing! Don't think of the audience; think only of the play, and of your fellow actors. Try to fancy you are only rehearsing."

"I can't—I can't!"

"Well then, think of Miss Atherton; she is well used to this sort of thing, and is perfectly self-possessed. Try to feel as if she were *really* your rival;—as if we were all the real personages we pretend to be."

Again he spoke in the same meaning tone of voice. Helen forgot her terror of the audience; and her glance sank beneath his.

"We must leave the stage," he added, "unless you wish the play to begin with an interview between Evelyn and Clara! The curtain will draw up directly."

They left the stage. Miss Atherton, as Georgina, and Mr. Marsh, as Sir John, took their places; and the curtain rose.

"She makes a heavy Georgina," Mr. Huntingdon whispered, "and will be a capital foil to your Clara.—What utter want of animation! What a pity little Kate didn't have the part. Why wouldn't she take it, I wonder?"

"She refused it; either because Lord Clifton does not act, or, because Grace disapproves of private theatricals, and has influenced her against them."

"What humbug! Don't you think so?"

"No, there is no 'humbug' in Grace. She is very good—very good; and I wish I were like her!"

She sighed heavily.

"And as ugly?" he inquired, with a laugh.

"I don't think her ugly. I never can see ugliness in good people."

"Oh!"—and he made a grimace;—"turning moralizer! Don't, my dear—it does not become you!"

Again she felt confused. He continued:—

"Do you agree with that assertion of Sir John's,—that 'men are valued, not for what they *are*, but what they *seem* to be?'"

"I don't know;—yes," she replied, colouring painfully; for this was one of the lessons that had been early instilled into her by her mother.

They were silent for a few moments; then Mr. Huntingdon added,—

"Now, collect yourself. Walk on, with a firm, yet quiet step.—This little lady is seized with a panic," he said, addressing Mrs. Atherton, who personated Lady Franklin. "Will you reassure her?"

Mrs. Atherton bestowed on Helen a glance of utter contempt, intended to overwhelm her with confusion, but which had a very different effect. She replied to it, with a flash of defiance, and then walked firmly on to the stage.

Mindful of Mr. Huntingdon's directions, she did not look at the audience, but endeavoured to forget their presence; and she succeeded tolerably well, until reminded of it by the burst of applause that followed Evelyn's speech:—

"Look you now!—Robe Beauty in silk and cashmere—hand Virtue in her chariot—lackey their caprices—wrap them from the winds—fence them round with a golden circle;—and Virtue and Beauty are as Goddesses, both to peasant and to prince. Strip them of the adjuncts—see Beauty and Virtue poor—dependant—solitary—walking the world defenceless; oh, *then* the devotion changes its character! The same crowd gathers eagerly around—fops—fools—libertines;—not to worship at the shrine, but to sacrifice the victim!"

"Dear me!" simpered Mrs. Grey, in the boxes; "how very true!—Just what I have always said!"

The scene was soon over; and Helen sat down beside Mrs. and Miss Atherton, who cast contemptuous glances at her—looks, which made her blood boil.

"You acquitted yourself pretty well, for a first attempt," drawled Miss Atherton. "I think the audience might have applauded you a little more!"

‘Do you?’ replied Helen, in icy tones, though her blood was on fire. “I don’t agree with you;—there was nothing to applaud. Clara was a merely passive character throughout that scene. The whole interest was concentrated on Evelyn. Clara’s points will come out presently.”

Miss Atherton smiled incredulously. That smile won for Helen many a round of applause that night! When she again appeared before the audience, all her timidity had vanished; she had but one feeling,—the passionate desire—the determination—to mortify her rival. She succeeded: burst after burst of approbation greeted her ears. She and Mr. Huntingdon divided the applause; and when the curtain fell, and he offered her his arm to escort her back to where Marty awaited her, she returned, with interest, the looks that Mrs. and Miss Atherton had vouchsafed to her at the commencement of the evening.

But one had been there, who had quailed in agony before this almost public triumph; who had looked—alas! in vain—for one token of shrinking modesty, in her whom he had fondly imagined to be so pure and right-minded. He had almost prayed that she might fail—that the unwonted feeling of being the centre of attraction to so large a concourse of spectators, might overpower her with confusion. He had hoped to see her shrink—hesitate—even quit the stage. But no;—the most finished actress could not have replied with more graceful courtesy, to the plaudits of her audience. The sweet smile—the ready blush—the courteous bend—the eyes just raised, and then suddenly veiled;—all, all were there—nothing was wanting!

He left that brilliant throng, feeling as though in another world—another state of existence. Helen was changed in his eyes; she seemed to have become suddenly transformed, from a simple child, into a woman of the world.

“And if her manner be so changed, what must her *heart* have become?” he asked himself. “The external is but the reflex of the internal!”

He was mistaken. Just as the brilliant exterior of the ripened fruit bears no resemblance to the kernel within, even so is manner no unerring guide to feeling; and had he, even then, made his appeal to Helen, much misery might have been spared to both.

How the words of that play rang upon his memory for years, with a sad, mournful, unceasing knell ; which smote his heart none the less bitterly, that his conscience told him how his pride—not his *reason*—had stood between him and the fulfilment of his duty towards himself and her. He forgot her youth—her inexperience—her mother's evil training ; he remembered only that he was wronged—deceived—by the woman he had chosen for his wife.

"And this brainless puppy," he exclaimed,—"for no doubt he is brainless, or he would not take part in such follies as these,—this brainless fool aspires to her hand—to her's who should have been my wife ! Let him ; I will not interfere ! Besides, she is no longer the same Helen that I have loved. I saw her clasped in his arms !—What purity could submit to such an embrace ?—*Her* purity ?—Oh ! it is gone—gone !—Or rather, it never existed ! I have been the slave of my fancy—my own, miserable dupe !"

He groaned heavily. But then recurred to him, the words of the play :—

"It is a poor heart that a coquette's contempt can break !"

"Aye—and I will cast her from mine !—She shall not *despise* me !" he bitterly added, in remembrance of his mother's words.

Then, his thoughts again reverted to the play, which he had known well, before that night.

"To marry one whom you could adore, and whose heart is closed to you—to yearn for the treasure, and only to claim the casket—to worship the statue that you never may warm to life—Oh ! such a marriage would be a hell all the more terrible because Paradise was in sight !"

"A 'statue'—yes ; beautiful to look on, but wanting all that makes woman lovely and beloved ;—heart—soul—feeling !"

Why did he not remember a passage in that same play ;—
"How we misjudge the depth of the human heart. How, seeing the straws on the surface, we forget that the pearls may be hid below."

And again ;—

"Is it not a strange thing, that in matters of reason—of the arithmetic and logic of life—we are sensible, shrewd, pru-

dent men? But touch our hearts—move our passions—take us for an instant from the hard safety of worldly calculation, and the philosopher is duller than the fool!”

Alas! the mirror of his thoughts was broken, and reflected no image clearly! Hitherto, the even current of his life had called forth no great amount of self-control; it had flowed on in quiet murmurs, soothed by the affection of a doting mother, and the unselfish devotion of a sister who regarded him as the most perfect of beings. This was his first trial; he was all-unprepared to meet it. His pride, as well as his love, was cruelly wounded. He had garnered up the affection of his whole life, and had bestowed it where he had thought it met its full return;—and *what* a return had been made! Nay, he had even seen enough to make him believe that he had a *rival*, in one, his superior in rank, fortune, and those external qualifications, which, he knew too well, the whole drift of Helen's education had taught her to consider of paramount importance.

“Why, Howard!” exclaimed his friend, as he arrived at the Harwoods, “how ill you look! And you are wet through! How could you think of starting without an umbrella—since you *would* walk?”

“Is it raining?” asked John.

“‘Raining?’—Say, rather, ‘*avalanching*!’ Come,—off to bed this minute, to get rid of your wet clothes; and I’ll bring you a tumbler of brandy-and-water, piping hot.”

John was not sorry to be alone; and when his kind friend had left him, with the injunction to “sleep,” he passed a night of such mental agony as he could never afterwards recall without a shudder.

How wearily passed the next day, and the next! Often, in after years, did his memory bring back to him those evenings at the piano, where he sat, feigning to listen to Miss Emma's warblings, which, however, were so far desirable, that they spared him the necessity of joining in the conversation. On the third day, he left the Harwoods, *malgré* the vehement remonstrances of his friends, and the tender, appealing glances of the gentle Emma. His luggage had been sent on to the station; so he and Tom walked there.

His conscience smote him, at the last, for having made his visit a mere convenience.

"You must come to Brockley, Tom."

"Yes, yes, I'll come."

"Come soon, then ;—as soon as I've shaken off this confounded attack of liver."

"Oh ! then that's what has made you so dull ? Well, I wondered ;—you have not been yourself. I couldn't think what was the matter.—A terrible thing, when one's liver gets out of order !—makes one low-spirited, and nervous, and irritable."

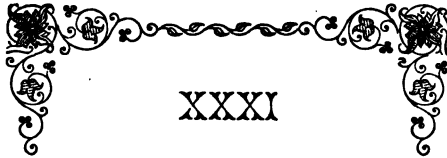
"Have I been irritable ?"

"Well—rather !"

"Then set it down to liver—nothing but liver ! Another time, when I am all right, I will come down upon you again, —if you will have me."

As he looked out of the window of the railway-carriage, and saw his good friend's honest face quite saddened at their parting, his conscience again smote him.

"Yes," he thought ; "there is more worth in him, than in a hundred—a thousand—such as she is ;—and yet, I value one glance of hers, more than all his true and tried friendship ! But it shall not be so, long ; I am no weak sentimentalist, to allow my heart to yield, in defiance of my reason. No ?—I will forget her ! 'Poor,' indeed, must be that heart, which 'a coquette's contempt can break !'" he added, his thoughts still reverting to the play. "'The heart was given to the soul as its ally, not as its traitor.' She shall not find *me* one of those 'Sybarites of sentiment, who deem it impossible for humanity to conquer love—who call their weakness the voice of a resistless Destiny.' 'Destiny ?' that word for fools and cowards ! Shall I allow this vain, heartless girl, to think that she can sway mine ? No, her influence was founded in delusion ; that delusion dispelled, her influence will cease ! This night's work shall cost her dearly !"



MARTY'S ADVICE.

HELEN passed that night in uncontrollable agitation. She had entered so thoroughly into her part, that she had insensibly forgotten it was only acting. Mr. Huntingdon had become merged in Evelyn; and she felt as if he could never again be any other to her. The memory of his gentle words and looks, and of the deep meaning he had conveyed into much of the dialogue, vibrated pleasingly in her thoughts; pleasingly, yet painfully; for there was ever one idea behind, jarring harshly with her pleasant fancies, like one false note in a sweet melody.

"Oh! what will he do? How will he bear it?" she thought, in agony.

"Bear" what? and she shrank from the answer;—she could not bring herself to even *think* the words,—“My marriage with Arthur!” Yes—it was no longer “Mr. Huntingdon,” but, “Arthur.”—It had come to that!

How the noble sentiments she had of late been studying—sentiments of the most exalted heroism and self-abnegation—had at times struck with giant force upon her conscience! And now, they came crowding in upon her brain in quick succession; till her pillow was wet with tears of sorrow and humiliation.

“Oh! why, why did I ever leave Brockley? I was so happy there, with him!—And I should have been happy as his wife, *then*;—but now—I have deceived him—he could not love me if he knew how false I have been!—and I never could meet his glance, till I had told him all—”

The door opened very gently. She hid her face, and pretended to be asleep; for she thought it was her mother. Someone sat down beside the bed. She heard a heavy sigh; and knew that Marty was there. She looked up; and a ray of comfort thrilled to her heart at sight of the honest face.

"Oh! my dear Marty! my dear, dear Marty!"

"What—crying, my own! Dont'ee—dont'ee, Miss Helen!"

And she, too, sobbed.

"Marty—if we had never left home!"

"Yes, my dear—and Mr. John—poor Mr. John!"

"Oh, Marty, don't talk of him!—it makes me wretched!"

"My dear—I've come here a'purpose to talk about him.—To-night, my lamb, I wanted to see you in the theaytur; and so, I first stepped up to where all the grand folks was 'a-settin on them there benches with the curting behind. Well my dear, I thought I'd look through one side of the curting, behind the grand folks, and see you 'a-actin; but when I got there, there was a gentleman a'looking in already. I thought I'd seen him before; but I couldn't be sure. I watched him (and so I forgot to look at you my dear) till it was all over; and then he went away—all of a rush, like; but, as sure as I live, it was Mr. John!"

Helen was seized with a cold trembling. She started up in bed, and grasped Marty's hands, gazing wildly in her face.

"It's true my dear, and I must say it! And I'm sure I'd say anything, to turn you from what you're a'doin'!—Oh, Miss Helen!—my dear, dear young lady—dont'ee be angry with your old Marty—dont'ee!"

"*Angry, Marty?* Oh, no, no!—But tell me more—tell me!" she gasped.

"Miss Helen, don't think me bold and impident! I must speak my mind—I must tell you what's for your good, my dear! I can't see you a'goin' on this here way, with nobody to stop you. May I speak my mind?"

"Yes my dear Marty. You are my only friend here—my only friend!—Oh! I am very, very wretched!"

"Dear lamb!—dont'ee take on so!—I can't a'bear to see you! There, there, my precious—you're better now."

"Marty, tell me what you were going to say; I think I

knew what it is! Were you not going to tell me, that I am a wicked, ungrateful wretch, to have won the love of so good a man, only to desert him?"

"No, my dear;—no—no! I was goin' to tell you, that you don't know what you're a'doin';—that you're a'trustin' to that there Mrs. Huntingdon, and she's a'deceivin' of you! and Missis ought to be ashamed of herself for helpin' of her!"

"Hush, Marty—hush!"

"I won't hush! my mouth's open, and I must say it! Them two is a' tryin' to get you married to Mr. Arthur; and he aint fit to hold a candle to Mr. John!"

"Marty, how dare you!—There!—I promised not to be angry.—Go on!"

"My dear, if you don't mind you'll be like the dog as dropped the mutton-bone, all along of snappin' at its shadder. The shadder looked bigger, maybe, in the water; but it was *only* a shadder, after all!"

"What do you mean, Marty?"

"I mean, that if you want to be happy, you'd better go home as fast as you can, and marry Mr. John!"

"Marty, you forget your place!"

"No, Miss Helen—I *can't* forget it! I can't forget I'm your old servant, that you used to love, before you took up with all these fine folks!"

"Poor Marty!—And I love you now better than ever!—But, why should I not be as happy with Mr. Arthur, as with John?"

Marty hesitated. After a few minutes, she burst forth with,—

"I'll tell you—I will! I will! I don't care what comes of it!—I went to Missis's room yesterday, to dress her for dinner. I went in through the dressin'-room, and sat down there to wait, because Miss Willingham was a'talkin' with her, and Missis says it's very vulgar for a servant to interrupt, and I'm always to wait there till she calls me. Well—the door was open, and I thought they knew I was there; but they didn't—or they wouldn't have spoke as they did. T'wasn't much as they said; for Miss Willingham had been there for a good bit, and was just goin' away. She says—says she, 'Then you'll save Helen from this dreadful fate? If she marries

Arthur, she'll be wretched!' And Missis says,—'I will; and thank you.' And Miss Willingham says again,—'And our' (some fine word she used) 'will be a secret?' 'O'course', says Missis. 'It would be very ungrateful towards Mrs. Huntingdon, to publish it', says she. Then I got frightened; for I thought Miss Willingham was comin.' So I ran down stairs, and didn't go to Missis's room till she rung.—And how white she did look, to be sure!—just for all the world as if she'd see'd a ghost!"

"Poor mamma!—And is that all, Marty?"

"Yes, my dear—and enough, too, I think! And I've been wonderin' ever since, what Mr. Arthur's bin and done;—p'raps, murdered somebody!—who knows?"

"Nonsense, Marty! Now, does he *look* like a murderer?"

"Well, I must say he don't."

"Marty, I know what they were talking of! Miss Willingham spoke to me about it; she makes a mountain of a mole-hill.—But, about John, Marty;—you must have been mistaken, in thinking he was here."

"No, Miss Helen; he was here, as sure as my name's Marty! And oh! my dear, my dear—he was sore troubled, and sighed as if his heart would break. And when the play was over, he went out into the pourin' rain, and didn't seem to feel it even, or to know it was a'rainin'. Oh, Miss Helen! don't ee break his heart!"

For a few moments they were silent; then Helen answered, in a trembling voice,—

"No Marty, I will not! And now, good-night, my dear, honest friend. God bless you, dear Marty,—God bless you!"

"Good-night, my lamb! Pray to God to forgive you, and make you strong to do your duty."



OPPOSING COUNSELS.

THE next night, Mrs. Huntingdon and her son sat in close conference.

"I cannot imagine what has come over her," said Arthur. "All day long, her manner has been the same. She is perfectly courteous and polite; but she repels all my advances, with the most chilling coldness. After dinner, she retired to her room, and was absent until tea-time; after tea, she again vanished, on the plea of finishing a letter, which, she said, she had begun after dinner. To whom does she write, I wonder? Can it be possible, that there has been, all this time, some village swain, who has stolen a march upon me? Still worse, can he have any right to her affection? I have sometimes fancied it, from her sudden fits of caprice. If I thought so—"

"My dear Arthur—no! If you saw the clodhoppers who are the *elegants* at Brockley, you would recognize the absurdity of your supposition!"

"Then, why this sudden change, and this—this *curse*d writing?"

"Arthur, do try to curb your impetuosity! You are too much in love, to be able to judge calmly."

"And whose fault is it, that I am in love? I had no wish to be!—I was quite contented as I was. But you brought this enchanting girl here;—and *who* could resist her?"

"You don't know how to manage her, Arthur. Now, if you will act by my directions, I will engage that she is yours in less than a week."

"I will do anything you like," he sullenly replied; "I am tired of waiting for that which may never come."

"Well then, listen to me.—To-morrow, make no effort to thaw Helen. Devote yourself to Miss Atherton—"

"I *hate* Miss Atherton! Besides, I have tried that before—"

"—And with success! Try again—but don't give in too soon, or you will spoil all. Helen is of a very jealous disposition; and may easily be piqued into accepting you."

"But why can't she accept me at once, if she likes me?"

"She is a little spoilt by admiration, is wilful, and capricious, and will only be caught by a *coup de main*."

"Very well.—Then, I am to play the devoted to Miss Atherton to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"And after that?—"

"I will tell you, to-morrow night."

The next day, true to her resolves, Helen avoided Mr. Huntingdon. At first, she felt relieved, on finding that he made no effort to shake her purpose. By degrees, however, she missed the excitement of his presence; and, looking up from a book which had engaged her for sometime, she beheld him with Miss Atherton. The blood rushed in torrents to her brow; and she again sought to interest herself in her book. In a little while, however, her glance followed her thoughts. Miss Atherton was looking quite animated (for her), and was actually blushing!—No wonder; for Arthur was gazing earnestly into her eyes, and was whispering something, that appeared to be very pleasing to her.

Helen felt choking. She left the room. When alone, she tried to school her thoughts—she tried to think of John!

"What is it to me?—what right have I to care about his attentions to her?—But no, I don't care about it—at least, not so far as *he* is concerned;—it is *her* insolence, that I cannot endure! I will marry John—I have made up my mind to that; but I cannot bear her triumphant looks.—I know what I will do!—flirt with Mr. Ponsonby!—he admires me, I know!"

So, down she went again, without searching her own heart—without knowing how deep an evil lay rooted there. Even then, she might have plucked it out; but she would not. Had anyone asked her, "*why* are you going to flirt with Mr. Ponsonby?"

she would have shrunk from giving the true answer; for it would have been, "to make Arthur jealous, and draw him back to my side!" Down she went, then; and was soon laughing and talking with Mr. Ponsonby, in a way that annoyed Arthur, yet did not lure him away from Miss Atherton. The object of her apparent preference was not, however, deceived as to her feelings. He knew that she was actuated by pique against Arthur; but he thought he might as well profit by it, since it threw him into the society of so pretty a girl.

That night, the mother and son renewed their conversation. His brow was stormy; and he looked most discontented.

"I shall not keep it up any longer!" he cried, sullenly flinging himself into a chair.

"Why not?" his mother coolly demanded.

"Why not?" he impatiently reiterated. "Because she does not care one straw! She has been flirting all day with Ponsonby!"

"Pique, Arthur!—nothing but pique!"

"And she'll do the same to-morrow—I know she will!" he exclaimed, impatiently stamping about the room.

"Well, let her!" his mother replied, even more calmly than before.

"Let her?—no, I will not! I have no patience with this dull policy! I shall at once propose to her!"

"—And be rejected."

"No—accepted!"

"Arthur, I tell you that you will be rejected, if you propose to-morrow. Pique her for a day or two longer;—*then* propose. The day after to-morrow is the Emsdale ball. That evening, you must be more than usually assiduous in your attentions to Miss Atherton. I will watch Helen; for I know every turn of her countenance. I will tell you, when the auspicious moment arrives. Trust to me, act cautiously, and she is yours!"

He sighed, and left her.

The next day, Helen's ordeal was still more trying; for Mrs. Huntingdon had asked Mr. Ponsonby to drive her in her pony-carriage; so that Helen could not play him off against Mr. Huntingdon, whose attention to Miss Atherton was now so pointed, that everyone noticed it; and Helen felt that she

was the subject of much observation, and of not a little comment. Mr. Rexford was engaged with Mrs. Marsh, and Lord Clifton with Kate Willingham; so Helen sat alone, deeply mortified, and wishing, with all her heart, that she had never left Brockley. Brockley! how she now shrank from the thought of it! How she remembered the shabby parlor, with the darned window-curtains—the old shawl for a table-cloth—the faded carpet! How all the numerous shifts and contrivances they had had recourse to, came thronging in upon her mind to disgust her!—The old dresses, badly made in the first instance, turned, and sponged, and dyed more than once;—the bonnets, fabricated in the vile taste of the village *modiste*;—the clumsy boots and shoes, which made her feet look twice their natural size;—the eternal, badly fitting gloves, which no amount of altering at the wrist-buttons would induce to forego wrinkling across the back of the hand;—the pinching economy of the whole *ménage*;—all—all—came floating back in turbid waves before her mind's eye, and seemed this day to contrast, even more loathsomely than before, with the exquisite and costly refinement of her present home.

She was aroused from her reverie by the gentle voice of Grace Willingham:—

“I should so like to walk in the garden, this delicious afternoon. Will you go with me?”

Her proposal afforded a welcome prospect of relief to Helen. Rising, she accompanied her.

After walking on in silence for a little while, her friend abruptly said:—

“So, you have dismissed Arthur?”

“What makes you think so?”

“His attention to Miss Atherton.”

Helen felt a little comforted; her vanity was soothed. She began to think herself a person of strong mental powers. She took credit to herself for having discarded Mr. Huntingdon. Her friend continued:—

“But, take care! he is trying to pique you! I know it; for I have watched him.”

“He will not succeed!” said Helen, rather proudly.

“Nay, Helen, tell the truth.—He *has* succeeded in annoying you!”

"Well, perhaps! — or, rather, I am annoyed at Miss Atherton's impertinence. I should like to triumph over her *once* more; just to shew her, that *she* has no chance with Ar——Mr. Huntingdon, when I choose to receive his attentions!"

"How childish! How unworthy of you, my dear Helen! Remember it is said, 'the envious man troubleth his own soul.' Do not, I beseech you give way to the feeling—it will lead you further astray than you have any idea of; nay, it may, in its consequences, embitter your life-time. Helen, do you read your Bible every day?"

"No; I have not been in the mood for it, since I have been here."

She spoke hardily; but she blushed crimson. Her companion resumed, very gravely;—

"I will tell you *why* you are not 'in the mood for it.'—You are indulging in all sorts of feelings that the Bible condemns!"

"Well?" said Helen, rather defiantly.

"Oh, Helen! can you speak so to me?"

She made no answer. Grace continued:—

"I fear, Helen, that you are not accustomed to refer all your actions to a Higher Power;—nay, not only your actions, but your thoughts!"

"You are right, Grace, I am not religious—I wish I were!" sighed Helen.

"But you can be, if you like. Everyone can obey God, if that is what you mean by being 'religious!'"

"Grace—I don't care for reading the Bible: it does not interest me. My thoughts always wander from it while I am reading it."

"Because you do not keep them under proper control. Oh! Helen, Helen! you will have to come to that at last!—to loving your Bible, and conquering your passions, and seeking God's will before your own. If you are not lost for all eternity, you must come to that before you die! I pray that you may turn into that path of your own accord, and not need the scourge of the Almighty to drive you into it. I fear that a troubled life is before you."

"Ah! you allude to Mr. Huntingdon?"

"No—for you have given him up. I allude to the life of suffering, which falls to the lot of those, whose trust is not placed on some surer foundation, than the changes and chances of this life;—to the sharp trials which the Almighty mercifully sends to those, who will not listen to His words of love!—Trials, which He sends, to quell their pride, and break their spirit, and wean them from the allurements of the world; so that they turn to Him, and He saves them. Such trials have been mine, Helen; I do not speak of what I have *heard* only!—But there is Mrs. Huntingdon returning. Shall we go back?"

As they retraced their steps, Grace added:—

"I spoke to your mamma about Arthur. She was much obliged to me for the information, and, of course, would be averse to your marriage with him."

Helen felt pained, she hardly knew why. Before long, however, she was again laughing and talking with Mr. Ponsonby. Arthur did not seem annoyed; he appeared thoroughly engrossed by his fair companion; and Helen began to think that her own empire was at an end. It was a relief to her, when the evening came to a close, and she sought her own chamber.

Marty saw that something was amiss, but she did not dare ask; for Helen was in one of her impatient moods, and would have quarrelled with a straw.

"There, that will do Marty—I'm sure you have brushed my hair long enough, unless you wish me to be bald!—Go now."

And poor Marty sorrowfully withdrew.

No sooner was Helen alone, than she burst into tears.

"Oh! that we had never left Brockley! None of these envyings, and jealousies, and rivalries! We were so peaceful and happy! And, if the life *was* humble, I had never known any other; and I was content."

Nay, she forgot, that her own undisciplined temper—her striving after that which she had not—her struggles to appear other than she was, had marred the happiness of her life in the little village. The same failings which had operated there, did here; only, that as they now found a wider field of action, they were more calamitous in their results. She forgot,

that happiness springs from *within*—not, from without ; it is a thing of *mind*—not, of circumstance. Is not Lazarus often happier than Dives ? It never occurred to her to seek in her own heart for the root of unhappiness ; she fancied it dwelt in the external circumstances that surrounded her.

She was still weeping, when her mother entered the room.

"My dearest love!—tears ? What is the matter between you and Mr. Huntingdon ? I cannot understand this sudden change of his."

"Mamma, he was becoming so very much in earnest, that I was obliged to check him ; and he has hardly spoken to me since then, but devotes himself to *her*. Oh ! I *hate* her !"

"But my dear, how could you be so very foolish as to repulse him ? I would rather see you married to him, than to anyone."

"But John, mamma !"

"My dear child!—as if that had not come to an end, long ago !"

Somehow, this speech, which would have been agony to Helen, two short months back, now fell soothingly on her ear.

"Helen," her mother continued, "it is useless for you to attempt to deceive *me*.—You *love* Arthur Huntingdon !"

"No, no !—I do not !" she exclaimed, burying her face in her hands.

"You do, Helen ; and I think—I think he loves you !"

"Oh ! do you?—do you ?" she cried, in joyful accents.

"But no, no ; he cares more for *her*, now !"

"Helen, I fear you have been very foolish and inconsiderate. You might have married Arthur, if you had played your cards better."

"But John !"

"Nonsense ! John is nothing to you now ! You were never in love with him ; and he took a most unworthy advantage of your youth and inexperience, when he asked you to be his wife. It is a mercy that you came here ; for I do believe you would have married him, and been wretched for the rest of your life !"

"Do you think so, mamma ?" asked Helen, though a certain small voice kept whispering to her, that all her mother

said was false ; but she would not listen to the voice—it grated too harshly on her ear. She preferred error to truth, since error seconded her own secret inclinations.

“And Helen, can you bear to think of returning to that miserable village—to all the wretched shams and pretences that we were obliged to have recourse to?”

“No—I cannot!”

“Can you bear to relinquish all the refinements that you have been enjoying for the last two months?—To be shabbily dressed—Why,” Mrs. Grey suddenly exclaimed, making a rapid mental computation,—“why, since we have been here, Mrs. Huntingdon has spent a hundred pounds on us, if she has spent one penny! There’s that rich blue silk (eight-and-sixpence a yard, if it was a farthing!)—and the pale green—and the canary—and those pretty morning dresses—and the silk barège—and the grenadine—and—no end of others, my dear,—to say nothing of three bonnets, and two mantles, besides scarfs. And then, the shoes, and boots, and gloves, and muslins, and laces! And then, the things she has given *me*! Why, my dear, she has spent *more* than a hundred pounds on us!—And can you bear to go back to Brockley, and to dress in shabby, mean old things—as you used to do?—and always to walk—even in muddy weather—”

“You forget, mamma;—if I married John, I should have a brougham!”

“A *brougham*!” ejaculated Mrs. Grey, in accents of supreme contempt. “A miserable ‘one-horse-shay!’ (Forgive me, my dear—the mere thought of Brockley makes me vulgar!) A brougham!—Why, if you were Mrs. Arthur Huntingdon, you would have three or four carriages! And to think of this noble house being yours—as well as one in London!—and an opera-box—and a splendid retinue of servants—and hosts of grand friends;—knights—baronets—lords—earls—dukes!—all crowding to your receptions! And you would be the reigning belle, my dear—I know you would!”

“If I had never met John!” sighed Helen.

“John, indeed! he is out of the question. Girls give up men every day—in *good* society, I mean—and nothing is thought of it; nor do men break their hearts about it.”

"Don't they mamma? Don't you think John would be very unhappy?"

"No, my dear; he is the last person to be so. You are young and inexperienced.—*I* know men; and I know that they never break their hearts!"

"Mamma, I think you are giving me very good advice. I shall think over what you have said."

"Do, my dear; and I am sure you will accept Mr. Huntingdon—if that Atherton girl will allow him to approach you!"

"He shall! I will defeat her, mamma—see if I don't! I will wear my pink crape to the ball to-morrow night!"

"The ball!" exclaimed Mrs. Grey, in horror. "Dear me! Dear me! I forgot!—And here we are, losing all the 'beauty sleep'! Good-night—my dear, sensible child!"



THE BALL.

ALL the next day, Arthur was most assiduous in his attentions to Miss Atherton; and Helen was so dispirited, that she could hardly reply to what Mr. Ponsonby said to her. The evening came; and she began her toilet, with a depressing feeling that the pink crape and white water-lilies would be entirely thrown away.

"Law!" said Marty, "how beautiful she *do* look, *to* be sure!"

"Do I look better than usual, Marty?" she anxiously inquired.

"That you do! I never see'd you look so beautiful!"

And in truth she was so. Her splendid hair was gathered in folds to the back of her head, and ornamented with a few exquisite white lilies. Her eyes—large, soft, dark,—would have been almost too lustrous, had they not been tempered, by their velvet lashes, to the most seductive softness. Her face was of a perfect oval; and the rich, dark bloom of her complexion—rich beyond what is usually seen in our cold English isle, seemed to belong to a native of Spain, rather than of this climate. The sadness which that night shaded her brow, served but to enchanse the brilliancy of her smile;—a smile, such as is rarely seen—a sudden flash of radiance, often coming when it was least expected. Helen was neither tall nor short; and her figure was as yet slight and undeveloped, but formed in the most faultless proportion. Truly, Arthur pronounced her "enchanting." Since she had

left Brockley, her face had gained much in expression ;—too much, John would have thought, for she seemed too suddenly to have leapt the barrier that divides the child's mind from the woman's.

Not wishing to go down-stairs, till the carriages were announced, lest she should have to witness the flirtation between Arthur and Miss Atherton, she sat down to wait.

"What would I not give," she thought, "to stay at home to-night? I cannot—I cannot bear to see him with her! I did not know how much I cared for him—I thought it would be so easy to give him up! I wish I could feel *quite* sure that John has no claim on me. Poor John!—I used to think him perfection!—Why can't I now? He is not changed!—I suppose I am! I know that I have become selfish, and worldly, and ill-natured, and jealous!"

Nay, rather, she had been all these before she had come to Staniswood. She had been "worldly, selfish, ill-natured, jealous," for years—from childhood upwards ;—it was the fruit of her education. At Brockley she had had those faults in a minor degree, because, within the contracted limits of a little village, few things had happened to call them forth ; while here, her temptations were great ; and, in the midst of excitement, experienced for the first time, her mind was unhinged—her perceptions blunted—her judgment warped. How true those words of Thackeray's :—"But fortune, good or ill, as I take it, does not change men and women. It but develops their characters. As there are a thousand thoughts lying within a man, that he does not know till he takes up the pen to write, so the heart is a secret even to him (or her) who has it in his own breast. Who hath not found himself surprised into revenge, or action, or passion, for good or evil ; whereof the seeds lay within him, latent and unsuspected until the occasion called them forth?"

"Well," thought Helen, "I must not cry—it is unbecoming. Besides, regrets are useless now. It is too late—too late!"

Nay, it is never too late—never—to repent, and to act for the future, as if the experience of the past were not quite lost upon us! It is never "too late" to do what is right—aye, even though such a course entail sacrifices more bitter

than death! We are all apt to find, in that expression, "too late, now!" an excuse for persevering in the downward path; because it is more pleasant to our feet than the upward one!

As Helen entered the drawing-room, she glanced anxiously at Miss Atherton, with a latent, though unacknowledged, hope, that she might be less becomingly attired than herself. She was disappointed. Miss Atherton's taste in dress was unerring;—whatever she wore, seemed to suit her better than anything else that she could have chosen. This evening, her dress was of white crape, which floated in gauzy, ethereal folds around her. Her hair was waved, and was gathered into a knot at the back of her head, whence it fell in graceful loops, mingled with sea-leaves and water plants. She had never appeared to such advantage; and, as Helen gazed upon her tall, commanding figure, and compared it with her own, her heart sank within her. The two exchanged glances of defiance; and Helen's wavered, before her rival's cold stare of insolent triumph.

Had she not been so intent on watching her adversary, she could not have failed to perceive Arthur's look of undisguised admiration at herself.

"Helen," whispered her mother, "you are beautiful to-night! You can eclipse her, if you choose. Don't let her triumph!"

Helen's only answer was a flashing eye—a compressed lip.

"Arthur," said his mother, just before they set off, "keep it up; she is all but yours!"

"Mayn't I ask her to dance?—not once?"

"Yes—*once*; or it would look like pique!"

"But must I not speak to her to-night?—I mean—"

"I don't know. I will watch her. Do nothing, without consulting me."

Who cannot call to mind some gay scene, to which he has perhaps been looking forward with hopeful anticipation, marred by some untoward circumstance, or chain of circumstances? How many an aching heart lies hidden beneath the gay smile, the sparkling conversation, of the ball-room! How the music, the brilliant lights, the bright dresses, the merry laughter, sicken and revolt the sad, lonely heart, amongst the unthinking crowd! Better to sit alone, in a

darkened room, with silence around, than in the glaring contrast which such revelry presents to our own gloomy thoughts.

And so thought Helen, as she entered the ball-room. Not long, however, was she allowed to muse; for her hand was so eagerly sought, that her card was soon filled, and she sadly remembered that Arthur's name was not in the list of her engagements.

Mrs. Grey was in her glory!—Helen was the belle of the room! Miss Atherton also was much admired; but her hand was always sought after Helen's had been refused.

Helen never once glanced at Arthur; but she *felt* that he was with Miss Atherton. Often, as she passed them in the dance, scraps of their conversation fell upon her ear; and once, when she stood behind them without their being aware of her proximity, the following speech emanated from her rival's lips, and filled her with rage:—

"Yes, Miss Grey is certainly pretty," was the drawling reply, to something that Arthur had said; "but she is sadly unpolished—wanting in finish. It is easy to see that she has not had the advantage of a Parisian—or even a good English—education."

"Perhaps so," her companion replied; "but those who don't admire 'French polish' would consider that an advantage. She is very young, too; but, let her marry, and, in a couple of years, she will hardly have her equal!"

"You are enthusiastic!" sneered his companion. "Were it not too common-place, to talk of 'being in love,' I should almost suspect—"

"Oh, no!" he interrupted; "I am a general admirer."

"But," added Miss Atherton, "she is not likely to marry. She is as poor as a church mouse! She has no lack of partners in a ball-room; but men want, in a wife, something more than a bright eye, which may grow dim, and a fresh cheek, which may fade;—a mere dancing-doll!"

"True; but we are missing this delicious valse! Shall we go?"

And off they went, followed by Helen and her partner. After a few more rounds, they stopped; and Helen sat down beside Miss Atherton.

"How annoying it is, that people will not let one rest!" said the latter, addressing her.

"I suppose you could sit still, if you chose," remarked Helen, very drily. "I *like* dancing; if I did not, I would sit still!"

"Ah! it is all new to you!—must be very delightful, no doubt. I wish I were country-bred. One loses so many pleasures, by being sophisticated."

"I am young, you see. When I have been out so long as you have, I dare say I shall care no more for dancing than you do," observed Helen, with the greatest apparent simplicity. (She could have annihilated Miss Atherton!)

The other continued, glancing at her list:—

"And I am engaged for the next polka, to Sir Hugh Grahame, then to Mr. Avenel, then to Lord Carsdale, and then to Colonel Jeffreys;—all of them, people in whom I do not feel the slightest interest. I wish they would have let me off; but they really would not do so. Now, if they had asked you, I dare say you would have liked them," said Miss Atherton, with a malicious look at Helen.

"They *did* ask me; but I was engaged; so they tried you," was Helen's amiable and courteous rejoinder.

Now this is, I think, the chief evil of ball-rooms;—the envy, and jealousy, and discord—the utter want of forbearance and good-feeling, which too often prevails in them. Young ladies spend an hour, more or less, in decking themselves for admiration, either general, or particular. They enter a ball-room, fancying themselves bewitching; they find themselves eclipsed; they try to outshine their rivals; they fail; and their hearts are filled with "envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness." But, after all, the ball-room is not the *cause* of the mischief—it only develops it; for a heart that is filled with the Christian graces of "meekness, temperance," the love of mankind—"seeketh not its own." Evil passions dwell in the heart, by the fire-side, as in the ball-room; but in the latter case they are developed—drawn out—while, in the former, they lie dormant. One is the sleeping cobra; the other is the reptile erect. They who condemn gaiety on this score, should remember, that the springs of action are within us; and that a heart which cannot resist the temptation found in such places, would be equally vulnerable in quieter and more domestic scenes. If

we go into the world, and mingle in its gaieties, the effort to prevent their gaining too great a hold on our affections, will be a far better discipline than sitting at home, and talking morality. But, if we substitute the means for the end—if we enter society for its own sake—for the gratification of our own pride, or vanity, or love of excitement—we err grievously; we should do better to stay away. Ah! let us always remember, that, wherever we may go—whether we feast with Dives, or starve with Lazarus—we shall find opportunities of *doing good*—that great and glorious privilege of all, from the monarch to the beggar. I was once forcibly struck by seeing a poor Lascar—himself a mendicant—rush forward eagerly, to help a poor blind beggar—man over one of the London crossings. I marked the tender, anxious solicitude with which he guarded and supported the old man; and I thought within myself, that this poor Lascar had done a better deed than the grand dame who sends her hired menials with golden alms, to the hovels she is herself too proud to enter. Again, a knot of people were one day gathered round a little work-house boy, who was kneeling in the road, with a poor maimed dog in his arms. The poor animal had been dashed against the wheel of a cart, and was injured in so shocking a manner, that it had to be put to death. The boy carried it in his arms as tenderly as though it had been an infant; and every cry it gave seemed to smite terribly upon his heart, although the dog was not his own, and he had never seen it till then. Now, this boy was untaught—uncared-for. His mother, after cruelly treating him and her other children, had abandoned them to starvation; from which they had been rescued by the intervention of the police. He had had none to teach him lessons of humanity and compassion. He was himself so poor and helpless, that one would have thought it utterly impossible for *him* to do good to anything. Besides, sufferings such as he had endured, should have been enough, one would think, to blunt his feelings, and render him dead to softening impulses. Not so, however.—Here was this boy, the only one amidst that crowd, to show pity to a poor, helpless brute—the only one! And I thought,—“Here are the elements of a Howard, or a Wilberforce! Though this child has lived all his life among the lowest dregs of society—among

those habituated to every vice and crime—the pure spark breathed into his soul by his Creator has smouldered there, been fanned into a flame, and glows with a brightness greater than my own!" Oh! we can all do good—all! If we have no money to bestow, let us not grudge the kind word—the pitying smile; for though they cannot still the cravings of hunger, or clothe the shivering limbs, they can send a warm glow into the sinking heart;—and that is something! But, to resume:—

Helen's words called a flush into her rival's face. Helen felt gratified. She did not remember that she was "putting a stumbling-block—an occasion to fall—" into the way of her fellow creature. Again she was whirled off in the dance; her eyes sparkling—her cheek glowing—with her small victory. When next she sat down, her mother accosted her.

"Helen, my dear, this will never do! let me see your card. What—filled?—and the other side too? Has not Mr. Hunt-ington asked you to dance?"

At this moment, Arthur approached.

"When is *my* turn to come?" he asked, addressing Helen.

"Look!" she replied, playfully holding up her card.

"You should have asked sooner!"

He looked vexed. Mrs. Grey's foot touched Helen's as she interposed with,—

"But I am sure Helen will not refuse to dance with you. I never approve of casting aside old friends for new ones;" (Oh! Mrs. Grey!) "and all these names are strange to me. Helen must forget one of these engagements."

"Do!" pleaded Arthur. "And," he added, in a whisper,— "and, to tell the truth, I am engaged to Miss Atherton for this very dance; but, if *your* memory will fail you, mine will not be more retentive."

"You don't deserve it!"

He thought Helen's eyes had never appeared so bright as they did now! The music began. She rose, accepted his arm, and, with one triumphant glance at her mortified adversary, took her place.

"This is the first *valse* I have had to-night!" he exclaimed, as they paused, to rest.

"Nonsense! you have valsed every time!"

"Call *that* valsing?" he asked, in accents of profound contempt.

"Why not?"

"She is so heavy! I would as soon dance with a young hippopotamus!—nay, rather!"

Helen laughed. That musical laugh was a traitor to the feeling that gave it birth!

"Besides," he added, "a valse, in order to be (what it should be) pure, unalloyed felicity, should be shared with the one whom we prefer to all—" he was about to say, "the world," but he checked himself, and substituted, "in the room."

"Well," replied Helen, "you were dancing with Miss Atherton; and I suppose you prefer her to anyone, for you are always with her!"

Despite herself, a shade of pique was perceptible in her accents. What he *might* have said in reply, remained unsaid; for, just then, the music ceased, and his mother touched his arm. He started. He had forgotten her and her counsels.

"Arthur, do take me to get an ice. I am dying of fatigue!"

In the ice-room, Helen was soon surrounded by a crowd of gentlemen, one of whom, hearing the re-commencement of the music, soon led her away. Before long, she saw Arthur again with Miss Atherton; whom he left no more for the rest of the evening.

Wearily she returned home, and lay down to rest—not, to sleep, for her pillow was wet with tears.

"I will ask mamma to go home," she thought. "He never cared for me;—he was only flirting! How handsome he was to-night! Oh! how I wish I had the same chance as before!—But, to return home, and see John!—No—no—I cannot marry him! I cannot! And now, even the Howards' way of living seems so mean! If Arthur marry *her*, I shall break my heart! How little I thought, that evening when we arrived here, and Mrs. Huntingdon led me to the window where he stood—how little I thought what he would become to me in two short months! Yes, I love him—I know it now; I cannot hide it from myself! And why—why does he, alone, remain insensible? Mamma said I was the belle of the

room, to-night; and I knew that I was—and everyone but Arthur admired me! His very indifference makes him better worth having.—I should not have cared so much for him, if he had sought me as all the others do!”

Mrs. Huntingdon had acted wisely, in counselling her son to affect indifference.

As she and Arthur parted for the night, his face wore a look of dissatisfaction, and of dogged resolution.

“Mind, not one day longer!” he said. “To-morrow-night, or never! My patience is exhausted; and I must know my fate.—Better to die at once, than by slow torture!”

“Yes, Arthur; but better still, not to die at all!—Better to suffer a *little* pain, than to lose your life! Give her one day more; if I mistake not, she will pass it in weeping!”

“Poor girl!—if I thought so!”—he passionately exclaimed. “But, good-night—good-night!”

When he had gone, his mother fell into a train of thought.

“Yes,” she said; “she is sure to accept him. If not—I tremble for him! Oh! she is sure—sure to accept him!”



TO-MORROW-NIGHT.

MRS. HUNTINGDON was right ;—Helen spent the next day in tears. She had lost all spirit for her mock flirtation with Mr. Ponsonby ; and sat in her room, vainly struggling for composure. Before dinner, she bathed the tell-tale evidences from her eyes, and went down-stairs.

Mr. Huntingdon was even more than usually devoted to Miss Atherton ; who, not having forgiven Helen the value of which she had defrauded her, stared at her in the most provoking manner. Once or twice, she thought that Arthur was watching her ; and she feared, that traces of tears were yet on her face. She fancied, too, that Miss Atherton detected them ; and she hated her rival more than ever.

"Oh !" she thought, "for one hour's triumph over her ! I would *die* for it !"

Dinner came to an end. They adjourned to the drawing-room. Mrs Huntingdon sat down beside her.

"Helen, dearest, you are not well," she said, in her most winning tones.

"Not *very* well," replied Helen, glad of any excuse that would account for her sad looks.

"Miss Grey's indisposition is very sudden !" sneered Miss Atherton. "I thought I had never seen her look so well and happy, as she did last night. She was dancing with—let me see, who was it ?—Oh ! Mr. Huntingdon. I suppose the *reaction* makes her feel ill."

Miss Atherton pronounced the word "*reaction*" in a way that

seemed to signify "the reaction of Arthur's feelings." How Helen hated her! She replied, in tones of pointed sarcasm:

"If I appeared merry, it was because Mr. Huntingdon had just cut another lady for me, and had told me of it.—But you could not have taken much interest in your own partner, if you were watching us. No wonder though; for you were dancing with poor Mr. Lorrimer."

"Why 'poor?'" Miss Atherton asked, in tones of pique.

"Because he had been engaged to me, for that valse; and I threw him over. He looked so dreadfully rueful; and then went off, to ask you! Of course, from your acceptance, your partner must have treated you as I did mine."

Helen laughed. Miss Atherton bit her lip, and withdrew to another part of the room; where she was joined, ere long, by Arthur. For the fiftieth time, she made a resolution, not to engage in a war of words with Helen; who, determined to keep no terms with her adversary, allowed no consideration of either expediency or common politeness, to prevent her saying the harshest and rudest things that occurred to her.

"Never mind her, my dear," whispered Mrs. Huntingdon; "her head is turned, by the attention my son is paying her. I would give a great deal, to see her place taken by a rival. I should not like her for my daughter-in-law; and I dread what may happen when the other guests have departed, and she is left alone with him. And how sorry I am, to hear of *your* approaching departure!"

"Our departure? I have heard nothing of it!" exclaimed Helen, in blank dismay.

"Indeed? Why, your mamma told me that she was going away on *your* account alone;—that you particularly desired it!"

"Oh, no!" said Helen. She could not bear the thought of leaving Staniswood.

The evening wore away;—in wretchedness to Helen, in triumph to her rival; in unutterable impatience and anxiety to Arthur and his mother. Kate Willingham was asked for a song; and she sang with such deep feeling and expression, that Helen felt the rebellious tears again rising. Fearful lest they should attract observation, she left the room, and, sitting down in a large window-seat in the corridor, gave way to a passionate fit of weeping.

Ere long, a hand was laid on her arm. Mr. Huntingdon stood before her!

She sprang to her feet, and would have escaped; but, gently detaining her, he sat down beside her.

"Helen, you are unhappy!"

"I am not!" she angrily exclaimed; though the moonlight, streaming in through the great window, told a different tale.

"You *are*, Helen! Nay, it is useless to affect anger! I *will* speak to you—come what may!"

She was quieter now; for a faint hope began to dawn upon her.

"Before I continue, Helen, you must answer one question. I do not ask it from idle curiosity; you *know* I do not.—Tell me, were these tears flowing for the absent?"

"No," she faintly replied.

His arm encircled her. She did not shrink—she thought not of her plighted faith. She felt intensely happy!

"Helen, dearest, have *I*—it is a bold question, and may seem a presumptuous one; but love, or rather despair, nerves me with strange courage!—Have *I* anything to do with your grief?"

She made no reply. Her eyes sought the ground.

"Darling!" he exclaimed, with passionate fervor, "have you then misunderstood me? Have you thought that my heart wandered for even one moment from you? Ah, no! piqued by your coldness (your aversion, I considered it,) I have sought distraction in her society. But my heart was with you, Helen—with you!"

He bent down, and kissed her hands. She did not withdraw them.

"Helen—my soul! my life! do you—do you love me?"

"I cannot quite trust you.—You really seemed to care for her!" she murmured.

"Did I?—I was a better actor than I imagined!—But Helen, one word from you; and I will never again approach her! Only one word.—Do you love me? *Tell* me you love me!"

It was a very soft whispered, little word; but still it was the right one (for *him*.)

"Yes!"

He strained her to his heart.

"Mine, *for ever*, Helen?—*for ever*?

"Yes—ever!"

Alas! alas! was there no warning spirit hovering in the green moonlight, to whisper to her heart,—

"The substance, for the shadow!"



STANISWOOD AND BROCKLEY.

Now that Mrs. Huntingdon's scheme was accomplished, she no longer pressed the stay of the Athertons and her other guests; who one after another took their departure. Other visitors had come and gone; but their visits had been brief, and they had seemed a set apart from the first-comers, who, to the last, quietly pursued their own ways and plans.

Lord Clifton left, a few days before the Willinghams; and little Kate's bright smile vanished for a season, for he had not put the long-expected *question*. But little Kate was not one to mourn hopelessly over what could not be helped; so, even amidst the first shock of her disappointment, her thoughts reverted pleasantly to the next house she was going to, where a certain young lawyer was expected, whose heart had on a former occasion proved vulnerable to Kate's bright eyes and joyous smile.

Miss Atherton, after vainly trying to fascinate Mr. Rexford, who did not think it worth his while to *be* fascinated for the few remaining days of his stay, suddenly discovered that she had an immensity of writing to perform, prior to her departure; and lived almost entirely in her own room; thus depriving Helen of the full measure of triumph that she had anticipated. She was now, however, too much intoxicated by her sudden good fortune—too bewildered by so quick a transition from sorrow, and suspense, and mortification, to joy—certainty,—triumph—to think much of her disappointed rival. She and Arthur wandered together in the green walks, exchanging hopes, fears, anticipations.

"How different," she thought, "is this, from my first engagement! John used to find fault with me without ceasing; he was always blaming me, and putting the worst construction on all that I said and did. No wonder that I failed to love him. His harshness repelled me! And if it was so before marriage, what would it have been after? Mamma was right;—it is a mercy that I came here, or I should, most likely, have married John, and been wretched, and made him so too. People who love deeply,—passionately,—can see no error in the beloved.—Such is Arthur's love for me!"

She was wrong! People who love *reasonably*, can, and do, see errors in the object of their passion; and that is why a reasonable affection generally outlives an unreasonable one. He who sees only perfection in the beloved, is doomed to be one day grievously disappointed—since none are *perfect*. Then, in the sudden revulsion of feeling caused by the discovery, he goes to the opposite extreme; and almost doubts the existence of a single good quality in her, who has fallen from the ideal pedestal on which his fevered imagination had placed her. While he, who from the first, regards the object of his preference as a mortal, prone to error, as all mortals are, is neither surprised nor shocked, when those errors unfold themselves; convinced, that while human nature remain the same that it is, men and women will be endowed with the attributes of mortals—not of Gods.

The truth is, Helen's conscience told her that her conduct was inexcusable; she felt its stings, and tried to soothe them by the application of such specious arguments as the foregoing. By degrees, the friendly monitor ceased to warn; and she surrendered herself completely to the fascination of Arthur's society—to the charm excited by the vivid pictures which her imagination drew of her future life;—a life, such as, even in her most ambitious dreams, she had never dared to picture to herself.

And John?

For a week after his return home, he was stern—determined. Then, his mind reverted to the past—to those dearly remembered communings with Helen; and his memory—that intractable servant, so far oftener the traitor than the friend, recalling all that it should not recall, and banishing

all that should be retained,—dwelt clingingly upon the old days, even from the time when she was a little child. Then came bitter laments—passionate sorrow—vacillation of purpose—regret that he had not taken his mother's advice, and spoken with Helen at Staniswood. A little of this weakness might then have availed him—might have saved Helen and himself!

Alas! how seldom do we have the right impulse at the right time! or, if we do, how seldom do we yield to it! How often does our pride, or our temper, or our irresolution, step in between us and the one golden opportunity which may never again occur!

The fact was, John, like all who allow themselves to fall completely under the dominion of one master passion, was incompetent to judge correctly of anything connected with that passion. On all other subjects, he was calm, self-possessed, far-seeing; on this alone, he was either weak to folly, or proud and jealous to madness. At last his pride—that poor, deceptive, reed-like prop of human nature—so far gave way, that he resolved to await Helen's return, and trust to the influence of old associations over her heart.

"She loves me, I know," he said to his mother. "The brook may wander a little from its course, to play among bright pebbles, and over mossy stones; but it returns once more to its bed!"

"Yes,—unless it find another bed, deeper and pleasanter than the old one! Or, unless the old bed become choked up, and the little brook can flow in it no more!" replied his mother, with a sadder smile than his own. "You are weak, my dear. She is not worthy of you! She may again profess to love you—may swear eternal fidelity—may bewail, even with tears, her ingratitude and fickleness. She may even marry you. But never—never will you be happy with her!—never, unless a miracle be wrought in your favor, and she become—that which it would take years of anguish such as are not likely to fall to her share, to render her—a thoughtful, sincere Christian, deeply convinced of her own failings, and desirous of amending them,—anxious for something else than the gauds and trappings of the world;—in short,—a being with a heart!"

He looked up suddenly.—“Oh! she is not heartless! She has deep feelings!”

“Nay, she has *impulses*; and they are all selfish ones!”

“You are hard upon her, mother. You do not take into account, the influence exercised over her by a worldly parent, an imprincipled friend, and a sudden influx of flattery and admiration.”

“I do. But are there no counter-influences, that should be yet stronger?—Your love—my friendship, and Lucy’s—the counter-balancing lessons we have for years been endeavouring to instil into her heart! No, no—depend upon it, no virtue would take deep root in such a soil as that! As well might you plant the rose in a crevice of the barren rock, and expect it to flourish!”

“Mother—mother! for pity’s sake don’t speak so of her! I can’t bear it! You may be right;—but no—no! I cannot—I will not—think it!—But don’t, for God’s sake, don’t speak so of *her*!—It breaks my heart!”

“Poor John! And this is the end of all my care—my hopes—for you, my child! Truly, we can none of us look forward—we can none of us smooth the life-path of the beloved! We clear the way, and make it smooth—as *we* think; but, do what we will, briars and weeds spring up, and stones fall in the way!”

“No, mother—no! If it be as you say, I will be firm—I will be true to the good lessons you have taught me.—If I must lose her, she shall not see my weakness. But this trial is very, very sharp.”

“I know it, dear John. Alas! that your heart should be so undisciplined to receive it! Seek strength, my dear, where it is never refused;—strength from Him who has said, ‘I will *never* leave thee, nor forsake thee!’”

“I cannot!” he groaned. “I can think of nothing but of *her*. When my mind is at rest —”

“Ah, John! that is how we always delude ourselves! We are ever saying, ‘when I have a convenient season, I will send for thee;’ and the season never comes. When we are in trouble, we say, as you have just said, ‘when my mind is at rest;’ and when that time comes, we are too much engrossed by our temporal, to think of our eternal, happiness.

Thus it is ever. Oh! John, try to think of the 'one thing needful,' without delay, and at all times; if you had done so sooner, you would now have been reaping the benefit of it, in the support and consolation sent by God's Holy Spirit—the 'Comforter!' "

He sighed heavily, and made no answer; and thus the time passed away, until within a few days of Helen's return to Brockley.



FRUITLESS ADVICE.

It was the night before the Willinghams' departure. All the good-nights had been said; and Helen was alone in her room. There was a gentle tap at her door; and, in obedience to her response, "come in," Grace Willingham entered. She looked very sad; and Helen guessed truly the purport of her mission; which was, to warn her once more, for the last time.

"Tell me truly," she began;—"are you engaged to Arthur?"

"Yes."

"Is it possible?—knowing what you do!"

"Yes;—I do not consider that a sufficient obstacle," Helen replied, rather coldly.

Grace resumed:—"But, does your mother approve? She also is aware of the truth; for I spoke to her without reserve."

"Mamma is highly pleased. She esteems Arthur greatly."

"'Esteem?'—but this has nothing to do with 'esteem!'"

"Excuse me—I think it has everything to do with it!—But we might argue for ever on this subject—I should still be unconvinced. I intend to marry Arthur!"

Her last sentence was spoken in a tone of such dogged resolution, that her friend saw the case was hopeless. She sighed, and added,—

"You are infatuated, Helen; and there is no hope for you! You will be wretched!"



Helen smiled sarcastically; for it was beginning to occur to her, that Grace had some personal motive in so obstinately expressing her opinion.

"Helen," Grace continued, "I pray God that my fears may prove groundless, and that, almost by a miracle, your life may not be so wretched as I fear it will be. But, if not—if you are unhappy, and need a friend—will you apply to me?"

"I could not feel as a friend, towards one who had tried to prejudice me against my husband!" was Helen's lofty reply. (It is wonderful, how virtuous we can suddenly become, when it suits our purpose!)

"Will you write to me?" asked Grace.

"I am a bad correspondent. I am afraid to promise."

"Do write to me, Helen!—I don't want to lose sight of you. Though you are offended with me now, the time *may* come, when you will think differently!"

She spoke so sorrowfully and with such sweetness, that Helen felt touched, and kissed her as she bade her good-night.

The next day, the Willinghams left; and Helen was abandoned to her fate.

The betrothed pair strolled out, as usual, and wended their way towards the brook, Arthur's favorite resort—for it reminded him of that evening, two months ago, when he had walked thither with her, and had noticed the sunshine falling through the trees, like a golden shower, upon her hair.

"Ah, Helen!" he said, "little did I think, that I then stood at the turning-point of my destiny! Though the weeks have sped rapidly, to me it seems a life-time since that evening. Does it to you?"

"Yes," she replied; "for we do not reckon time by days and weeks, but by feelings—emotions! Perhaps that is the reason why the first week of one's stay in a new place often seems longer than all the rest;—because the novelty of one's position calls forth so many feelings of pleasure, or pain, or wonder. And I think that this must hold good in a greater degree while we are young, because our emotions are in general more easily called forth, and also because ——" She hesitated.

"'Because' what?"

"Because, while we are young, our characters take their impressions from the external influences which surround them; hence, even so short a space of time as two months, is sometimes enough to work a change which, under ordinary circumstances, would not be effected in as many years;—as in my case."

She was mistaken. Her character had suddenly become *developed*—not changed. As well might you assert, that the full-blown rose is not the same flower that it was when a bud, as, that two months could change a character from what it had been.

"You are pensive, *Helena mia!*"

She roused herself, and, fearing lest he should read her thoughts, diverted his attention, to a little wild flower that grew on the banks of the stream.

"I have never seen it before," she said. "Do you know its name?"

"No, love, I am not skilled in botany. It is a pretty, graceful little thing.—Suppose we call it, 'the gem of Brockley.'"

She blushed at the implied compliment. John had never paid her compliments—at least, not such as Arthur's.

"I should like to transplant it," she said; "—I should like to have something, from this spot!"

She sighed, in mingled pain and pleasure.

* * * * *

They were a small party at dinner;—only themselves, and the Athertons, who were to leave on the following day. Mrs. Grey now, in her turn, stared triumphantly at Mrs. Atherton; who was the more disconcerted, inasmuch as Mrs. Grey's attire was now so faultless, that she could not detect the minutest flaw, on which to fasten her cruel eyes. This day, however, she managed to ruffle the dignity of the victor, by adopting a tone of good-natured patronage, most galling to its object. First of all, she skirmished with her light troops, by expressing, in general terms, her regret at the termination of her visit. By and bye, however, she brought her heavy dragoons to the charge.

"Is there any chance of our meeting in Paris?" she asked, in the blandest manner.

"I really cannot tell; my engagements are so numerous, and—so various," replied Mrs. Grey, with a care-worn expression of countenance, and a true Parisian shrug, (copied from Madame Delorme.)

"Indeed!" responded her enemy, with a well-bred look of surprise. "—But, if you *should* be in Paris, and find yourself at a loss, there is my address. I shall be happy to be of any service in my power; or, if I am unavoidably engaged, my maid is a very clever person, and will shew you every attention."

Mrs. Grey could stand it no longer. She came out with a bouncer.

"Thank you; but I always travel with a courier. I cannot endure the trouble of having to attend to money matters!"

Mrs. Huntingdon's face expressed as much surprise as *her* well-bred face *could* express. Mrs. Atherton's teemed with polite incredulity. Helen stared, in utter amazement; and vainly tried to persuade herself that her mother alluded to the days before her marriage.

Mrs. Atherton sounded the retreat for a moment; then, rallying her troops, returned to the charge with fresh vigor.

"Will you be in town next season? If so, my address is Wilton Crescent."

"Thank you!—Nice situation! Do you know the Deverells, in Belgrave Square?"

"No.—What number?"

"I cannot remember—I never remember numbers; but I always go straight to the house—I know it so well. They are delightful people;—Lady Deverell is my most intimate friend."

Mrs. Grey had begun to "draw the long bow," and a mighty long one it was! Determined to out-do all that her rival should say, she forgot the existence of such a thing as a "Court Guide!" Mrs. Atherton mentally resolved to consult that interesting compendium of knowledge, on the first convenient opportunity.

"Will your daughter be presented this season?" pursued her tormentor, with the same provokingly bland smile.

"It is uncertain," replied Mrs. Grey, assuming a lofty reproachful moral tone. "I do not like to say that I will *certainly* do this, or that, or the other. Who can tell what may happen before then?"

"True," pursued the harpy; "but still, a degree of prudent forethought is necessary. Of course we arrange our plans with the tacit understanding, that everything in this life is uncertain.—But I was about say, that, in case you have any difficulty in getting Miss Grey presented, I shall be happy to do it for you."

"Thank you—you are very kind; but I intend to present her myself."

This was too much! Mrs. Atherton knew that she had no chance—that her adversary was invulnerable; so she disbanded her troops, leaving her enemy in possession of the field.

When Helen was alone that night, she half reproached herself for having been so unamiable to Miss Atherton. Now that her rival was humbled, she could afford to be generous. Soon, however, these better thoughts melted away; and she fell asleep, to dream of grand houses, brilliant equipages, troops of servants, splendid entertainments, hosts of admirers, and *last* of all, of Arthur.

Yes, this engagement was very different from the former one! When she had been engaged to John, he had been first—not *last*—in her thoughts. The prospect of the nice house, and the man-servant, and the brougham, had certainly had its due weight; but all those things were only the *accessaries* to enjoyment;—here, they were the enjoyment itself.



MR. BROOKS.—THE SPY.

THE Athertons left, the next day. That same evening, their place was supplied by a fresh arrival—a Mr. Brooks. Helen felt it incumbent on her to be very polite to him; not only because Mrs. Huntingdon had mentioned him to her as an old and valued friend, but because he was remarkably attentive to herself, and seemed so especially desirous of making himself agreeable to her. But she wished, with all her heart, that he had postponed his arrival for a little while; since he formed an undesirable third, in her interviews with Arthur.

Mr. Brooks was about fifty years of age, tall, and powerfully made, with a keen grey eye, which expressed more quiet resolution—more indomitable *will*—than Helen had ever before seen in any face. He was a clever, well-read man; but, when conversing with Helen, he always managed to let her get the better of the argument. Indeed, in every way, he treated her with the most studied deference; and though, afterwards, she would have given much, to provoke him into abandoning this invariable courtesy of manner, he never did so for one moment;—always quiet, retiring, deferential. Of his past history, no one, save Mrs. Huntingdon, seemed to know anything; and on that subject, he preserved an inscrutable silence. One thing was certain;—he had not always occupied the same position that he did at this time. Though he was now evidently in straitened circumstances, many expressions and remarks that escaped him from time to time, proved that he had once possessed considerable wealth.

A strange *contretemps*, which happened the very night of his arrival, predisposed Helen, if not to dislike, at all events to mistrust, him.

They had all retired to their rooms for the night, and Helen had partially undressed; when she missed a brooch—one of Lucy's gifts, and, re-dressing, returned to the drawing-room to seek it. The door was ajar; and she was much surprised to hear the sound of Mrs. Huntingdon's and Mr. Brooks' voices, in earnest conversation—they having returned to the drawing-room. For a moment, she hesitated to enter, and, while pausing, heard Mrs. Huntingdon say:—

"I tell you, that to part from her would be his ruin! Nothing could then save him!"

"And I tell you," retorted Brooks, "that this marriage must not—shall not—take place! Arthur has no *right* to——"

"Hush!" interrupted the other; for Helen had made a slight noise in withdrawing her hand from the door. She glided cautiously away; and passed the night in uneasy conjectures.

Next morning, she told Arthur what had occurred. He was quite at a loss to explain the mystery. One thing, however, seemed certain;—that Brooks had some strange hold upon Mrs. Huntingdon, as well as some interest in trying to separate Helen and Arthur. That he was an unprincipled and selfish man, and would stop at nothing to accomplish his purpose, seemed equally certain.

"But never mind, Helen," he said cheerily; "never mind! he can't separate us!"

"Still, Arthur, I should like to know——"

"So should I; and I'll try to find out.—Where does he come from?"

"I don't know;—he does not say. Everything connected with him seems wrapped in mystery."

"I'll tell you what, Helen—there must be some railway marks on his luggage;—unless he came through the air, like the man in the 'Arabian Nights,' who always rode upon a carpet. I'll ask Halkin where he comes from. He's sure to know."

"Yes—do."

That night he accosted his servant with,—

"I suppose you are so late in bringing my slippers, because you have been attending to Mr. Brooks. He brought no servant with him, I think?"

"No, Sir."

"—Must be troublesome, to have to look after his own luggage on the road," Arthur carelessly added. "—But, perhaps, he didn't come from any great distance?"

"Can't say, Sir."

"What?—call yourself a sharp fellow; and not notice the railway marks on the luggage of every new arrival?" laughed Arthur.

"They were all torn off, Sir."

"Well,—I've laid a wager that I'll find out where he comes from; and if you can find those same labels, I'll give you a sovereign."

"Thank you, Sir."

Now Halkin *was*, as his master said, "a sharp fellow"—a great deal sharper than he appeared to be! So, when he found himself alone, he indulged in some such mental soliloquy as the following:—

"Master needn't think to take me in by talking of this bet. There's something more in all this; and he thinks so! Why did Mrs. Huntingdon sit up last night, talking confidential to this Mr. Brooks? I'll know, before I'm many days older! The labels are off the boxes. They were torn off, before the luggage came into the house—and by Mr. Brooks himself, I'll swear, for no good purpose! It's no use looking for *them*. But I may learn something that may be worth more than a sovereign. It won't be the first time my silence has been bought!"

So, that night, when Mrs. Huntingdon and her friend renewed their conversation, Mr. Halkin's ear was faithfully applied to the key-hole. When the conversation was concluded, he withdrew, with a scared expression, most unusual to him; and, for a long time, he sat lost in thought. After awhile, however, his look of terror yielded to one of triumphant cunning and audacity.

"Yes," he mused; "yes—this is a trump card, Mr. Arthur! and if I play it well, my fortune's made! I've got you in my power; and it'll go hard but I'll keep you there!"

This went on for several nights.

When Mrs. Huntingdon made her appearance in the breakfast-room, a few mornings later, a servant informed her that Mr. Brooks had left. "He desired his compliments, and regretted being obliged to leave so suddenly." She started, and turned very pale.

Directly after breakfast, she hurried to the library, and wrote for some time. At last, the letter was finished, and directed to its address. She rang the bell.

Mr. Halkin, whose eye had, from time to time, during the writing of the letter, been applied to the key-hole, immediately beat a noiseless retreat, and then effected as noisy a return.

"Did you ring, Madam?"

"Yes;—but where is Robert? *He* ought to answer my bell. I am sorry to trouble *you*, Halkin."

"Don't mention it, Madam. I am always glad to make myself generally useful. Besides, I was coming this way."

"Thank you. Will you tell Robert to bring me a light, to seal this letter?"

In a few minutes, Mr. Halkin, still anxious to make himself "generally useful," returned with the light.

While laying it down, he had the misfortune to upset a box of wafers, which had been placed close to the letter. He gathered them up, however, and then left the room.

"Capital!" he reflected. "I've got his address at last! Now I shall know his letter, when it comes, by the post-mark. I'll keep a sharp look-out, for the next few mornings. I wish I could see what she has written!"

In a minute or two, he returned.

"I am going to the post, Madam. Have you any letters?"

"No, thank you, Halkin; I am going there myself."

"Sold, this time!" he thought. "But never mind!—his answer will tell what was in her letter to him."

A few days later, Arthur asked him,—

"Well, Halkin, have you found the labels?"

"No, Sir; they were torn off before the trunks came into the house."

Arthur's brow darkened. "You are a fool!" he angrily exclaimed,—“not fit to be a gentleman's servant! Why,

John Preston was a far more efficient fellow!—had more nowse about him, than a hundred such fellows as you!”

“If you think so, Sir, you’d better have him back!” began Halkin.

Arthur interrupted, with fury:—

“Leave the room, you insolent rascal!—unless you want to be kicked out of it!”

“What an ass I was!” he thought, five minutes later. “I forgot myself; and I’ll tell the poor fellow so. But it’s too provoking, to see this Brooks lording it over my mother, and not to know the reason! She tries all that she can, to cut his acquaintance; and he won’t take her hints. I fancy he will try to manage a private interview with Helen. I’ll take precious good care that he shan’t succeed!”

The next day, he tried, by a kinder manner than usual, to atone for his harshness; but Halkin was evidently not disposed to respond to his master’s overtures. His manner was sullen—hardly respectful; and, mingled with his sullenness, was a kind of tacit defiance. Thus, three more days passed.

It was the night of the third day. All were gone to rest, except Arthur, who was composing himself for his usual evening cigar in his own room.

That evening cigar was to him the great enjoyment of the day; for, in its pleasant wreaths of vapour, he used to picture to himself countless Helens—blushing, smiling, frowning, weeping,—in every possible mood; but always Helen, over and over again—nothing but Helen!

“How beautiful she was, as she sat on the bank of the stream;—her eyes cast down—a scarcely perceptible tinge of sadness tempering her usual vivacity! She looked rather sorrowful, I thought, when she spoke of that little flower, and said that she had not known it at Brockley; but I can’t blame her for feeling a little sad, on quitting her old home!—Confound that fellow Halkin! He grows more negligent every day! Why hasn’t he brought my slippers?”

He rang the bell; but no Halkin appeared in answer to his summons. Again and again did he ring; and not until he was fairly enraged, did the delinquent make his appearance.

“How dare you keep me waiting?—you negligent scoundrel!”

Halkin replied, in a voice that plainly betokened his evening's libations had been somewhat extensive,—

"I am not used to be treated like this ——"

"Hold your tongue! How dare you answer me, you drunken scoundrel!"

"I won't be treated in this ——"

"You have been drinking, you rascal! Leave the room!"

"I shall not!"

In a transport of rage, Arthur rushed from his seat, and violently ejected him from his presence.

In a little while, his excitement cooled down; and he again blamed himself, for having lost his temper.

"But the fellow's manner has become so insolent within the last few days;—he really wanted a lesson. I can't think what has changed him so. He treats me as though he—not I—were master! I must get rid of him."

Indisposed for sleep, he lit a fresh cigar, and, under its soothing influence, soon became, as before, wrapped in Hellenic visions. Thus engaged, it may be imagined he was not very well pleased, when Halkin, about an hour later, re-entered the room, perfectly sober, but livid with suppressed passion.

"Mr. Huntingdon," he began, "it's the first time I've been so treated by any gentleman, and the last time I'll be treated so by you! If I chose to tell, below-stairs, what I know ——"

"Ha! you dare to threaten me? And what do you know, that I should care for your telling? Tell, and be hanged to you! You're drunk, fellow!"

"Very well," said Halkin, sullenly turning away.

"Stop!" said Arthur. It suddenly occurred to him, that Halkin knew something of the Brooks mystery. "Stop! What do you know?"

"Do you think I'm going to tell you?" sneered the other.

Arthur seized him by the collar, and shook him violently. —"Tell, or not, as you please; you are a drunken, lying villain; and I won't believe one word that you say!"

"You won't? Very well;—I'll prove it!" And he left the room.

In a few minutes, he returned:—"Read that!" he said, dashing a letter in his face. "Perhaps you'll believe now!

You won't say I'm a 'lying villain' now! And when you've read it, tell me how much you'll come down, to stop my tongue!"

Arthur sat down, and began to read.

Alas! alas! he sat down, a happy being, full of hope and enjoyment; his life, a second Eden, filled with bright flowers and gay birds—a glorious sky above. He arose, a wretched, careworn man, hopeless, crushed, despairing! Till that moment, he had never known a care; from that moment, till his last, his existence was one of unmitigated horror and dread!

He could not tear himself from that fatal sheet; though its characters seemed to him to live, and move, and to stand out, like burning forks of fire, shooting into his very heart and brain, he read on, and on; and his heart grew dead within him.

At last, he slowly looked up. Halkin shrank back in horror, at sight of that livid, corpse-like face, with its hollow eyes, which gleamed like burning coals, as they met his own. The mouth opened, as if for speech; but an inarticulate gurgling was all the sound that came forth.

Halkin hastily gathered up the letter, and, not daring to look again upon that ghastly face, hurried away. Presently however, he returned.

He found his master sitting in just the same place, and with the same look upon his face. Struck with either remorse or terror, he fell upon his knees, exclaiming,—

"Oh, Sir! don't take on so! It mayn't be so bad, after all. Nobody need know it;—only keep it to yourself—I'll never tell one word of it! I wish I had'nt done it, Master;—but you drove me to it! Oh! cheer up, Sir! you'll be happy enough yet, I'll warrant!"

Still the same blank look upon Arthur's face.

"Happy?" he moaned, in a voice of such utter despair!—"Happy?—Never! Never! The sword will hang above my head. It may not fall—it may not!—but—it *may*!"

He did not heed the servant's presence. Halkin tried to rouse him.

"Don't think about it, Sir. Try to sleep. You'll be better to-morrow."

“‘Sleep?’” He laughed wildly. It was more a scream than a laugh,—“‘Sleep?’—to dream of this accursed thing! My heart will never sleep again—never, till death—that happy, happy sleep!”

Oh! the utter despair—the weary, hopeless misery of his accents, as he uttered those words!

And thus he remained, till the pale, cold light of morning came slowly shivering in through the dark curtains.

“Master, go to bed now, and *try* to sleep; or you’ll look so scared to-morrow——”

But still he muttered to himself.—

“She knew it! She knew it!—Cruel, barbarous wretch!—She knew it;—yet she suffered me to grow up with such visions of love and happiness before me! And—oh! merciful God!—she suffered me to win *her* heart—dear angel!—dear, innocent, helpless lamb! But she shall not be sacrificed!—No, by Heaven!—to-morrow I will set her free! Oh, Helen! Helen!”

“Come, Master—don’t take on so! It’s hard to bear, at first;—but take heart! Lie down, Master, and try to sleep a bit.”

Passively he suffered himself to be persuaded. He lay down; but not to sleep.

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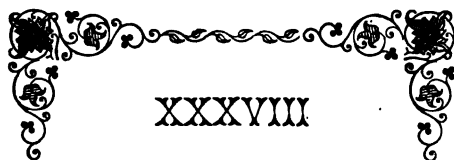
The next day, he was closetted with his mother for hours. After that interview, they were both pale as death. Mrs. Huntingdon’s concluding words were :—

“Yes, I believe, that to part from you now, would kill her! As for Halkin, we will agree to pay him an annual pension, so long as the secret remains undiscovered. That will secure *his* silence! And, as for the rest——there are a hundred chances, to one, against it!—A hundred—oh! a thousand—a million—that you make her happy. While you are certain to break her heart, if you desert her now. Why, then, substitute a certain, for an uncertain, evil?”

“True—true,” he dreamily responded.

“Then don’t look so wretched. Depend upon it, all will end happily.”

He groaned heavily; and made no reply.



A COMING SHADOW.

HELEN noticed that a change had fallen upon Arthur—a change, which she could feel, rather than define; for he was so guarded in his efforts to dissemble his wretchedness, that even his mother was in hopes that the violence of his grief was abating. Helen, however, could not be so deceived. When alone with her, he was frequently silent and abstracted; and, though his manner was even a shade more tender than it had been, he no longer appeared to be absorbed in her society. Some other thought was evidently uppermost;—she was no longer *first*.

Thus passed a week; till it was the evening of the day preceding their departure. Arthur's eyes had followed Helen incessantly—she had scarcely been out of his sight for one moment; yet he made no attempt to converse with her. Once, he took her hand, and gazed earnestly in her face. She thought he was about to speak; but he released the hand he had taken, sighed heavily, and turned away. Helen was about to leave the room, to conceal the tears she could no longer suppress; but he gently detained her.

"Helen, shall we walk, this lovely evening? It may be the last walk we shall ever take together!"

She turned pale, and faltered,—

"What do you mean, Arthur? I cannot understand you! You are changed—sadly, sadly changed!"

His head drooped, and he did not answer; but he drew her arm within his own, and led her forth.

She was turning towards the path that led to the brook ; but he drew her gently in another direction, saying,—

“Not that way! Not that way!”

“Oh; why not, Arthur? I thought you were so fond of the brook!”

He was silent.

“And—you most negligent Cavalier!” she playfully added, ‘you have never told the gardener to transplant that little flower!’

He shuddered, as he remembered that happy walk to the brook ; and a muttered imprecation escaped his lips. The revulsion between his present feelings and his vanished happiness, was too startling.

“Oh! Arthur—Arthur!” Her voice trembled ; but he did not notice it. Almost fiercely, he exclaimed,—

“Never more speak of it! Accursed be the memory of all past happiness! Oh! Hell—Hell!”

She shrank from him in affright. In a little while, her blanched cheek and quivering lip recalled him to his senses. He fell on his knees before her, and wildly entreated,—

“Pardon! Pardon!”

“Arthur, for heaven’s sake tell me what has happened! What has changed you?—tell me! Come, let us sit down here. Dear Arthur, do try to be calm—you frighten me! Feel, how my heart beats!”

“My own! my dearest!” he sobbed, “pity me!—I am wretched—wretched! The tortures of hell are raging in my heart!”

“Oh! tell me—tell me your grief! Let me share it!” she pleaded.

“‘Share it?’ great Heaven!—Yes, were I to tell you, you would, indeed, share it!—For you love me?—You love me?”

A mute caress was her only answer.

“And I—I am a monster!—a wretch, not fit to live! I do not deserve your love!—I shall make you wretched;—yet I cannot—I cannot give you up! Oh, Helen! dear angel! Helen! Helen!”

Again, she was frightened ; but she passed her hands within his arm, and gazed into his face. Her terror, her wild anxiety, again recalled him to himself. He continued, more calmly,—

"Helen, when people marry, they swear to love always—for ever—in spite of all that may happen—do they not?"

"Yes, Arthur."

"But, suppose a wife discover that her husband is not what she supposed him to be when she promised to become his wife!—Will she love him still, think you?"

"I think," she slowly replied, in wonder at his question, "that, if I were married, I should always love my husband;—and I should not be surprised if he did not prove *exactly* what I had expected, because I have been told that people never rightly understand each other *until* they are married."

He continued.—"Suppose, for instance, it were to come out, some years hence, that I was an impostor—not at all what I seem to be; would you—could you—forgive my having so deceived you?"

"I think that I could forgive my husband anything—almost;—it is natural for a wife to cling to her husband through all. But surely—surely you are jesting?"

He burst into a laugh.—

"Of course I was! I was only trying you!"

She felt a little hurt. He resumed, rather sadly,—

"But I am *not* jesting, when I tell you that I believe—I feel an inward conviction—that I shall not make you happy!"

"Oh, Arthur!" she remonstrated.

He did not heed her, but continued:—

"Yes, I feel it—I know it! And yet—selfish wretch that I am!—I would marry you!—I cannot bear the thought of giving you up!"

"Dear Arthur, don't give way to this morbid feeling! You make me wretched!"

"Then what would it be, if, for a life-time, you had to bear with my fits of depression?"

"But, what has happened, to change you so? You were so happy, a few days ago!"

"I was! I was!—Would to God I had died then!"

"But, tell me—" she persisted.

He suddenly rose.—"It is time to go in. Come."

She saw that he would not tell her. With a heavy heart, she walked on beside him. For a time, he was silent; he

was schooling himself into prudence. As they approached the house, he laughingly raised her face, and looked into her eyes.

"Why, you poor little darling—you have been crying! There, think no more of my folly;—I daresay I am out of health, and want change of air. I shall recover at Brockley, no doubt;—you will soon see me there, I promise you! I should, indeed, be the most unreasonable fellow in existence, if I could let anything make me seriously unhappy, while I have such a dear angel to love me!"

"Arthur, dear," she said, after a pause, "don't forget to tell the gardener about the little plant—will you?"

As sudden as the transition from the bright sun-light of midday, to the darkness of a gloomy cavern, was the black shadow that fell upon his face. He said nothing in reply.



TEMPER.—VANITY.—PRIDE.

FOR the first hour or so after leaving Staniswood, Helen could think of nothing but of Arthur's sorrowful face; but, as they approached Brockley, other thoughts came crowding upon her;—thoughts of her own treachery, her want of faith;—thoughts, full of reproach and dread.

Should she see John? Would he treat her as though the engagement still existed,—or, with the contempt which she felt she deserved? Suppose he were to appeal to her for an explanation—to reproach her! She did not know how she should act. She only wished that a week had passed over, and that she were sure she would not have to meet John, or his mother. For some time, none of the Howards had written to her; so she knew that she had displeased them; but, would they carry their displeasure so far, as not to call? She hoped they would; for she dreaded facing them.

Two months—only two months—since she had passed over that same ground; but how she was changed! She seemed to have suddenly become a different creature—a woman, full of thought, care, and anxiety.

Poor Marty felt little comfort in the prospect of her long desired return to Brockley; for she had seen enough to make her feel certain that Helen was “a-keepin’ company with Mr. Arthur, and wouldn’t walk with Mr. John no more.”

A few nights before, she had lingered, ere leaving her young mistress's room; till at last, Helen, who had of late been somewhat distant in her manner to the good servant had sharply desired her to go. Then Marty had begun,—

"Oh! Miss Helen—please——"

"Well, what do you want? Make haste; for I am sleepy."

"Please, Miss Helen—Oh! don'tee be angry Miss—don'tee!—Miss Helen, dear, do you mind the story I used to tell you when you was a babby?"

"What folly is this? If you can't talk sensibly, and say what you want to say,—go, and leave me in peace!"

"Oh! Miss Helen, dear,—it's the story of the dog and the shadder over again, Miss! Mr. John and Mr. Arthur ——"

"Leave the room!" Helen sternly interrupted. "And mark my words!—If you ever again presume to mention this subject, mamma will discharge you!"

Since that day, she had not spoken to Marty; and the poor soul had been wretched, and had gone moping about the house, till Mrs. Grey had declared she was more stupid and awkward than ever, and had given her warning (for the fifth time, since their departure from Brockley); to which, Marty, as usual, paid no heed.

And so, they were a very silent party, as they drove through the little street of Brockley.

The fly stopped at the door—(the nasty, mean-looking door!) They entered the cottage.

"I had no idea it was so small, mamma! What a mean passage!"

"I think we will call it the 'hall,' my dear—if you have no objection."

"Certainly, mamma. Oh, dear! Oh, dear! I could not have believed it possible that the drawing-room was so bad as this!"

"Enough to make one sick, my love!"

"Mamma, when Mrs. Huntingdon first arrived, what must she have thought of it?"

"'Thought of it,' my dear? Why, she no doubt pitied us from her heart, and resolved to get us away from it as soon as possible."

"And, do you remember our costume the day she arrived, mamma?—It was execrable!—but we thought it charming."

"Dreadful! dreadful! Pray don't mention it, dearest!"

Helen lay down, that night, with most disagreeable sen-

sations; foremost among which, was her anticipation of Arthur's visit.

"What will he think? What will he think? It must all appear so mean and horrid! If *we* think so, what will it be, to *him*? I wish he were not coming!"

Then, she thought of John.

"I wonder if he will call; I hope not. What shall I say to him?" and with this idea, she fell asleep.

The next day, Marty came running up-stairs to the room where she was unpacking, and announced,—

"Mr. John's down-stairs, Miss!" Helen turned very pale, and trembled violently. The dreaded moment had come, when she must meet him whom she had so cruelly injured!

"Don't'ee keep him a waitin' Miss!" pleaded Marty.—
"And, oh! *don't'ee* think it's too late, Miss! He's a noble gentleman, and he *do* love you so dearly!"

"Hush! Marty—hush!—You mustn't, indeed!" said Helen, in a stifled voice. "Oh! how my heart beats!"

"Poor dear!—And doesn't his beat too? Oh! my lamb—you don't know what you're a'doin'—you don't! you don't!" pleaded Marty, her voice almost breaking into a sob.

"Too late, now Marty!—too late! Besides, I would not go back, if I could. I must not keep him waiting; I will go at once;—it will soon be over!"

"Soon over, to *you*, maybe; but not to *him*—the poor, dear gentleman!"

"Hush, Marty! don't make me weak, since you cannot change my mind. There, I will go now!"

She expected to be assailed by sorrowful lamentations,—by entreaties—reproaches; and her heart failed her. Twice did she lay her hand upon the lock, only to draw back. At last, with a great effort, she turned the handle of the door, and entered the room.

She gave one glance at John; and the common-place speech that she had meditated, died away upon her lips. He was very pale; and a stern, almost fierce, expression sat on his brow. They were silent for a few moments; then he spoke, in harsh, abrupt sentences.

"Why have you not written?" She made no answer; and hung her head in shame.

He continued; and his voice grew colder and sterner than before:—

"Answer me.—Why have you left me in utter ignorance of your movements?—in *such* ignorance, that, but for a letter which reached me this morning, I should not have known that you had left Staniswood! Read that letter; and tell me what you have done, or how you have acted, to justify the statement contained in it!"

She read. When she came to the concluding passage, she experienced a sensation of relief; since her task was now comparatively easy. Thus wrote Tom Harwood:—

"And the latest news from Staniswood is, that Huntingdon is engaged to that pretty little Miss Grey."

"Look at me!" said John. "Look at me, and *deny* it! For it cannot be true!—such cursed perfidy could *not* dwell in so fair a form! Answer me—for Heaven's sake!—or I shall despise you more bitterly than I despise myself!"

There was no escape. In sheer desperation, she made a show of bravado; though her cheek was blanched, and a cold shudder was stealing through her.

"I *will* answer you!—What right have you to address me thus? you—"

"Nay," he interrupted; "let us not recriminate. I want a plain answer to my question. Is this true?—are you so false—so treacherous?"

"It is true!" she replied, with flashing eyes. "And now, hear *me*.—I was brought up in this little village. I knew nothing of life—nothing of my own heart. You were constantly with me. We of course—as a natural consequence—fancied ourselves desperately in love with each other. We—we—formed a sort of engagement—contracted unthinkingly, in an unguarded moment."

She paused. He calmly said, "Go on!" She resumed:—

"It would be absurd, to pretend that we were in love;—we were good friends—that was all! It is a mercy that I went away, and discovered my error ere it was too late!"

"Ah!" he drew a long breath; "So, we were not in love!—Is that it?"

He spoke sarcastically. This gave her courage.

"No; we did not love. Our ages and positions were

quite incompatible. I went to Staniswood; and soon found that I had mistaken friendship for love. Was I not therefore in the right, when I ceased to correspond with you?"

She had almost worked herself up to the belief that she had been acting from a sense of duty, and that he was most unjust! He was silent for awhile; either, because indignation usurped the place of grief, or, because his love had received so cruel a blow, that it was for the time dead within him.

We do not suffer most at the moment when the shock is received; we feel it later, when the heart has recovered from its first bewilderment,—in the long, long years, of hopeless, helpless, suffering—of bearing that from which no effort on our part can save us. A quiet grief is harder to bear, than a great shock; just as the continued dropping of water on the same spot in the head, produces an agony more excruciating than the hardest blow that can be given.

When John spoke next, it was very quietly; and gradually, a lighter tone seemed to infuse itself into his manner. Poor fellow! his darling pride was helping him a little now; helping him, only to desert him afterwards, when he most needed support.

"Well, well," he said, as if musingly, "it is wonderful how we change! But *you* had courage to confess it.—*I* had not!"

She looked up inquiringly, with a slight feeling of mortified vanity. She was too much of a woman, to brook the idea of her empire being abandoned so easily! He resumed:—

"Yes Helen, we did indeed fall into a great error; and it is fortunate we discovered it in time. But, 'better late, than never.'" (And he actually achieved a smile!) "You would have been far too young for me—not enough of a companion;—and I could not endure a mere plaything, for a wife!"

He was rather over-doing it; but Helen was too exasperated to perceive it, so she interrupted, with,—

"I am so glad to hear it! I shall be delighted to hear of your marrying some one who will make you happy!—And you must let me introduce you to Mr. Huntingdon?"

He bowed in assent, and smiled; but his smile was faint and sickly. She saw it; and her heart smote her. In a trembling voice she added,—

"And, John, we shall part friends?"

Their eyes met; and the same thought flashed suddenly, through the brain of each, rending aside the thin veil of concealment from their hearts. Again they seemed to be present at that gay scene, where she, the mock personification of a pure, unworldly woman, had uttered those very words, "Let us part friends;" and her lover's answer had been,—

"Look you, this is life!—The eyes that charmed away every sorrow—the hand whose lightest touch thrilled to the very core—the presence that like moon-light, shed its own hallowing beauty over the meanest things;—a little while—a year—a month—a day—and we smile that we could dream so idly. All—all the sweet enchantment, known but once, never to return again, vanished from the world! And the one who forgets the soonest—the one who robs your earth for ever of its Summer—comes to you with a careless lip, and says—'Let us part friends.'"

Bitterly did these words ring their iron knell through the memory of both;—bitterly and despairingly tolling upon his heart,—reproachfully clashing upon hers.

When John again spoke, it was in a tone of indifference. He asked,—

"And your new flame;—do you fancy yourself in love with *him*?—or, do you think that this also will prove to have been a mistake?—But, no," he added, bitterly and sarcastically in spite of himself,—“no; his *sterling* worth will no doubt ensure the continuance of your affection! Oh! Mammon—Mammon!”

Helen was nettled. Ignorant, or careless, of the pain she was inflicting, she sharply retorted,—

"He is young, handsome, fascinating, clever. Is it, then, unreasonable to suppose that I love him for *himself*?"

Oh! the agony those cruel words inflicted on the poor, true heart! He turned very pale, and replied, as steadily as he could,—

"No, but quite reasonable, Helen.—But, I was thinking of a passage in that play.—'Is love an auction? and do women go to the highest bidder?' What was the answer?"

"'Their hearts?—no!'" replied Helen.

"'But their hands—yes!'" said John, in a voice of stern

reproach. Then, he added, with attempted gaiety, "But, no more of this. We will, as you say, 'part friends'; and when, years hence, I introduce you to my wife—whoever that may be—I shall, no doubt, be too happy, to have one thought of regret for the fair little country girl, whom I once, for a short time, fancied that I loved."

She felt desperately annoyed. Oh! vanity! vanity! how it changes the heart's best feelings! She would rather have had him express his conviction, that utter misery would be his lot, than have heard him breathe one word of hope for the future!

"You must give me an invitation to your wedding, dear child," he added, still more gaily. "You will make the prettiest little bride that Brockley has seen for a long time past; and I would not, for the world, miss being present at the marriage of my little playmate. My mother, with her dear, old-fashioned notions, will be angry, I am afraid; and will, perhaps, not come. I, more accustomed to the world, know that engagements are made and broken off, every day; and that young ladies change their minds as often as they do their dresses!"

Ah! the weakness, the folly, of the human heart; most weak, in what it thinks its strength! John was in earnest, in intending to be present at the wedding. He thought, that thus alone could he prove to the Brockley people that he was not a rejected suitor—that no engagement had ever existed between Helen and himself; and thus, in order to avoid a slight annoyance, he deliberately resolved to inflict upon himself the most acute pain. But John was not singular in this respect; at times, we all act as he did, and I fear we shall, as long as poor human nature remains unchanged.

"And now, I must be going, Helen; but I will call again soon. I suppose the enamoured youth will be here shortly?"

"Yes; Arthur—"she checked herself. "He is coming here next week. It is very unconventional; but he would insist on coming."

"Ah! a sensible fellow. I daresay he has seen enough of you, little lady, to know that it is not safe to trust you alone! He knows you, for a little weather-cock!"

"But John, you confess that you, also, have changed!"

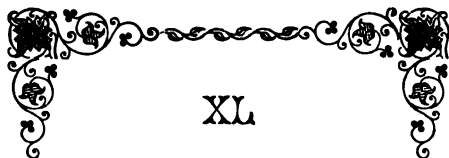
Why—why did he not answer truthfully? Why did his pride still rear its fearful barrier between him and happiness? Had he but expressed one tithe of the anguish that seemed rending his heart asunder, it might not, even yet, have been too late; for, once removed from the pernicious atmosphere in which, for the last two months, she had been living,—once back again in the scene of her earliest impressions, and alone with him who had been chiefly instrumental in forming them,—old feelings began to revive, or, at least, so far struggled for the mastery, that Staniswood and Arthur no longer reigned paramount in her thoughts.

John had undoubtedly the right to endeavour to re-establish his influence. Her hand had been promised to him; and he had the first claim upon her. He knew this; but his pride forbade his making the effort. He should have remembered her extreme youth—her faulty education—the great temptations by which her young weak heart had been assailed; and he ought to have excused her. But no,—his one great fault stepped in between him and happiness.

He merely shrugged his shoulders, and laughingly replied,—

"Ah! you had me there! Well good-bye—good-bye!"

And so, he left her.



GOOD-NIGHT.

ARTHUR'S arrival, about a week after, destroyed all chance for John.

The sudden fit of depression which had obscured the last few days at Staniswood, had disappeared; and Helen again yielded to the fascination of his society, and joined hopefully in her mother's sanguine anticipations of a brilliant future. She was never alone; for when Arthur was not with her, her mother's watchful eye never left her. Mrs. Grey saw that Helen's conscience pained her—that thoughts of the past sometimes stepped in, to mar her enjoyment of the present, and her hopes for the future. She saw, too, that the *influences* were changed; that, her fancy no longer dazzled by the splendid mansion, brilliant equipages, troops of servants, and fashionable guests, she was able to weigh more clearly the relative value of that which she had lost and gained. Besides this, she was once more in the scene of all her earlier associations; and, at every turn, her eyes fell upon some object or other that reminded her of past days, and of emotions which had been growing and strengthening for years—how unlike this new fancy, the result of but a few short months! Then, Miss Atherton's rivalry being removed, and the prize secured, she experienced somewhat of that general accompaniment to the possession of a desired object—indifference. I use the qualifying, "somewhat;" for a certain fascination of manner made Arthur's presence still welcome to her; and when he was absent, though but for an hour, she missed the excite-

ment of his society, her conscience again began to pain her, and she became listless and unhappy.

And thus, weeks passed away, till it was the day before the wedding.

Mrs. Grey was in a flutter of anxiety, lest everything should not be exactly *comme il faut*. Her great ambition was, to make this wedding eclipse that of Louisa Thompson's; and as "old Stub," in reply to a modest petition of hers, had sent her a most welcome present of one hundred pounds towards the wedding expenses, (coupled with a growling intimation that she must acknowledge its receipt, but need not trouble herself to thank him, as he sent it for poor William's sake,) she was enabled to arrange everything on a scale of unprecedented splendor. An unlimited order for the wedding breakfast was given to a confectioner at Hapsley; waiters, *ad libitum*, were to attend; all, in short, was to be done, that *could* be done.

Mrs. Huntingdon had arrived a week before, bringing with her Helen's entire trousseau, which she had begged her dearest Maria, to allow her, as a trifling mark of their old friendship, to provide. (Dearest Maria *did* allow her.)

The day passed. Everything was prepared. Helen, tired out, said good-night to all, and went to her own room.

Though it was autumn, the night was warm; and, opening her lattice, she leant out. How solemnly sounded the chimes from the belfry of the old church! How strange, to think that those old tones would soon grow less familiar to her, and that, as years rolled on, they would fade by degrees from the chords of her memory—be mingled in the wreck of all the other mementos of the past! The past! Her eyes wandered mechanically across the low-roofed cottages that intervened between her and the old red house, in which she had spent so many happy days—where her presence had been so welcomed—where she might never more enter—never, never more! She thought of the true heart—betrayed, wounded, trampled on, (*how* terribly, she did not know!); and, her head drooped forward on her clasped hands, as she sighed forth,—

"Yes—the dear, dear past! The future may be bright; but the old days can never come again! they are gone, with the old feeling—gone, for ever!"

Her door was opened softly. Marty entered.

"Miss Helen," she timidly began. The old relations between her and her young mistress had been cruelly snapped asunder. She knew not how she would be received. She stood still, in the door-way.

"Marty?"

Marty paused. Helen stretched forth her arms.

"Dear Marty—come to me!"

"Oh! my child! my child!" she piteously exclaimed, falling on her knees beside Helen, and covering her hand with kisses.

"I'm glad you have come, Marty. I could not have borne to leave you, in anger! I have been ungrateful; for you have been—you are—my best friend,—my dear, good, faithful Marty!"

"I knew it! I knew you wouldn't go and leave your poor old Marty, without a kind word! Oh! Miss Helen—"

"Call me your 'child,' as you used to do;—not 'Miss.'"

"Oh! my lamb!—my heart misgives me, that it's a sad lot that's falling into your lap! You don't love Mr. Arthur as you used to love Mr. John!—"

She paused, and glanced timidly in Helen's face.

"Go on, Marty," she sadly replied. "You may say anything, to-night. Besides, it is too late now!"

"No, my own—it's *not* too late!—And wouldn't it be better to tell Mr. Arthur now, that you don't love him so well as you ought, than to marry him, and let him find it out after? *Then, it would* be too late, my dear!"

"But I *do* love him, Marty!"

"You wouldn't have had him, though, if he hadn't been rich!"

"Hush, Marty!"

"No, my dear; you told me I might speak; and I must. I say, that if Mr. John had Mr. Arthur's fine houses, and land, and servants, and all the rest of it, you wouldn't have had Mr. Arthur. I know you wouldn't! And what's more, if it wasn't for that there Mrs. Huntingdon and Missis, I do believe you'd have Mr. John now!"

"Marty, I cannot—I dare not—hear any more! For mercy's sake, cease to torture me! Mr. Howard does not care for me.—He told me so!"

"Did he? Then—But no, I don't believe it! He hasn't forgotten you;—and he won't, neither! And maybe, he thinks nobody sees him, when he comes here every night, and stands under this 'ere window—aye, for an hour, and more, and never so much as stirs! And then, all of a sudden, he'll turn sharp round, and walk away quick—just for all the world as he did that night, when ——"

"Oh, Marty!" interrupted Helen, trembling violently, "are you *sure*?"

"Sure of what, dearest?" asked Mrs. Grey, who had silently entered the room.

The charm was broken! Back came to her imagination, the gay wedding, the fine clothes, the carriage that was to bear her away, the grand country house, the brilliant circles of which she was to be queen! Her voice changed, as she answered,—

"Oh! nothing, mamma. But it is a mercy that you have come! I should have sat up, talking to Marty; and have lost all the 'beauty-sleep,' and been a fright to-morrow!"

"And how ungrateful that would have been towards dear Miss Huntingdon, after she has given you that splendid dress, and the veil, and ——"

"Yes, yes, mamma," interrupted Helen, in dread of a recapitulation of the entire trousseau; "and now, kiss me, and say good-night; or you will be as bad as Marty. Besides, you will be looking a fright, too!"

"Dear me; so I shall! Good-night, love," exclaimed Mrs. Grey, hurrying in precipitation from the room.

For the bald old gentleman was to be at the wedding breakfast; and Mrs. Grey had lately begun to ask herself, with reference to him, whether, 'really now,'—etc.

At last, Helen was in bed; but no sooner had she lain down, than Marty crept in very softly, with something concealed under her apron.

"What!—again, Marty?"

"Yes, my own."—She paused irresolutely.

"Well, why are you bashful, Marty, dear? What do you want to say?"

Marty shifted from her right foot to her left, and then back again; she was evidently in one of her bashful moods.

"Why, what is the matter with you? And what are you hiding under your apron!" Helen laughingly demanded. "Come—I *will* see it!" And she dragged forth the hidden object; which proved to be a beautiful little casket.

"Oh! you dear, dear old thing! You mean this for me! you do—you do!" cried Helen; as, throwing her arms round the neck of her humble friend, she drew the honest face close to her own.

"Dont'ee cry, dear love! I wouldn't have done it, if I'd a'knowed it would have made you cry!" exclaimed Marty, in consternation.

But Helen could not, at first, check her sobs. At length she did, however; and she said,—

"My dear, dear friend, these tears do me good! Would that I had shed more such in my life! Oh! would to God I had! I should not then have become the selfish, heartless being I am now!"

"Dont'ee say that, my dear!—Dont'ee!" pleaded Marty.

"Marty, I will not scold you for spending all your savings—as I know you must have done—on your ungrateful child; because I know that nothing else they could have bought would have given you half so much pleasure. And besides, it will be such a comfort to me, to have something that you have given me!—*such* a comfort! I daresay you think that I care very much for all the grand things I am going to have, and the grand people I shall know; but indeed, indeed, Marty, I shall not value any of the grand things so much as this present of yours.—I shall not care for any of the grand people so much as for you, my dear friend Marty!"

In a little while, she resumed:—

"I don't know what my life will be—I hope it will be a happy one; but if I am ever in any great trouble, and send for you (for who could comfort me so well as my dear old nurse?), you will come Marty, won't you?"

"'Come!'—my lamb? aye, though I was at the other end of the earth! 'Come!'—If ever you feel a mind to have me with you, only send me word—'Marty, come!'—and——"

Marty's feelings were too much for her. In despair of finding words capable of expressing them, she made two or three gulps, and remained silent.

"How I wish you could have gone with me!" continued Helen; "but mamma will feel lonely enough as it is, without my taking you from her!—But, let me look at this casket. How beautiful it is! I do believe you must have bought it at that expensive shop at Hapsley.—You extravagant old thing! I shall put it in my new drawing-room, among all the other grand presents; and it shall have the best place of all, so that everyone will admire it; and when they ask where I bought it, I shall answer, that it was given me by the best friend I ever had—a friend whom I value beyond all others. And that will be the truth, Marty—the truth! Yes, though I have seemed ungrateful, I have never for one moment ceased to love you—never—never! Even when I have appeared most unkind, it has only been because I have been angry with myself—not with *you*, dear Marty—and, because I knew that all you said was right, though I did not choose to practise it."

"No, no, my dear;—I was a nasty, cross old thing, and didn't deserve you should love me! And you haven't done wrong;—and I didn't mean it when I said you'd may be not be happy, but I hope you will, my dear, good, beautiful—"

Again Marty was nonplussed for words.

"No Marty, you were in the right," rejoined Helen, very seriously. "I have all along been living for myself—doing everything to please myself, whether it pained others or not. I have all my life been selfish, and vain, and worldly. I have been living in disobedience to God;—*wilful* disobedience—for I have been *taught* what is right, and there is no excuse for me! I have not been very happy of late, dear Marty; and I have thought more seriously than I ever did before. I wish I could be religious,—conquer my faults, and feel kindly towards everyone;—yes, even towards those who thwart me. I should like to feel, that I was living for something better, than the miserable ambition of being an inch higher in the world, than my fellow-pigmies!"

She spoke bitterly—contemptuously—of herself; and with the bitterness, was mingled a deep tinge of sadness.

"My precious, ask the Lord to help you. It's no good trying to do it of yourself; for you're not strong enough—"

none of us aren't. Besides the Devil's always tryin' to make us bad; and we're not near so strong as he is—not of *ourselves*, I mean. Ask the Lord; and He'll make you firm as a rock, so that you'll be able to conquer the Evil One; and He'll soften your heart, and teach you to be good. He'll make it all easy for you, my dear!"

"I can't, Marty. I can't yet quite give up the things that I have cared for all my life!"

Marty sighed.

"I shall pray to the Lord, to make it easy for you, my lamb. I shall pray to Him, not to send you trouble, to make you turn to Him!"

"Ah, Marty! I often think that He *will* send me, some day or other, some heavy trial! I feel as if nothing else would sober me, and make me turn away from my follies and sins, to that which is, I know, the only certain road to happiness."

"But, my dear, you haven't seen what's inside the casket."

So Helen opened it; and found it to contain some little views of Brockley and its neighbourhood.

"Oh, Marty! here, I declare, is the church!—And here is this very cottage!—And here—" She paused, and then added, very sorrowfully "—the dear, dear old house! It's doors are shut against me now! But," she added, changing her tone, "what is this, wrapped up so carefully in paper?"

"Oh! Miss—dонт'ee think I make too bold!" pleaded Marty. "I was afraid you'd maybe forget your old servant, among all the new faces!"

It was Marty's portrait! In unfeigned delight, Helen kissed it again and again.

"Now, this is the best of all! Nothing, nothing that I have received, has given me half so much pleasure as this! Oh! thank you, Marty—thank you!"

"And good-night now, my dear;—good-night."

* * * * *

Marty was not the only one, who passed a sleepless night.—Another, with a yet heavier heart, paced to and fro in the cold, black air; his eyes rivetted on the little window of the room, where *she* was sleeping for the last time. At length, a hand was softly placed within his.

"John, my dear!"

"Mother!—I had forgotten. Is it, then, so late?"

"Two o'clock," she quietly answered.

"Come in now, dear John; and try to get some rest. Since you *will* be present at the—the ceremony, don't let your haggard looks betray you!"

"My own mother! I am unworthy such love as yours! I will do as you wish—I will try to sleep."



GOOD-BYE.

THE wedding was over. Mrs. Grey had looked extremely well in the becoming attire presented to her by her friend; and had acted the bereaved mother, to such perfection, that the bald old gentleman, on his way home, began to think within himself, "Well, really now—" etc.

Helen had been very quiet, and had not imitated the example of pattern brides; for she did not shed a single tear—at least, not in public. It was only when she had to say good-bye to Marty, in her own little room, that her lip quivered, and her hands were for an instant clasped before her face; but the next moment, she was calm, and said, very quietly,—

"When I am away, love me Marty!—don't remember all my faults!—Don't think that I feel coldly at parting!—Oh! Marty, I could weep!—I could weep! But, if I gave way for one moment, I should never have courage to leave you. Good-bye, dear Marty—good-bye!"

She turned away; and in a few minutes, the receding sound of wheels told their sad tale of parting.

Mrs. Howard was not there; no entreaties from her son had availed to persuade her; but Lucy, influenced partly by John's representations, partly by an earnest wish to see Helen once more before they parted for ever, had come with her brother.

As Helen stepped into the carriage, and it drove away, Lucy's eyes anxiously sought John's face. It was overspread

by a deadly pallor. For an instant, his eyes closed, and his lips worked convulsively. In another moment, however, he had conquered these evidences of feeling; and was laughing and joking with his friend, Tom Harwood, (who was staying with him); and the wedding guests remarked afterwards on Mr. Howard's excellent spirits, which, they said, had made him quite an acquisition to the party. They even said, they thought he shewed hardly enough consideration for Mrs. Grey's feelings, on the loss of her only child.

But, that night, his mother was seated beside him; and her tears were falling fast. For some time, neither spoke; then, she passed her arms gently round his neck.

"Oh, John! I would rather see tears, than this heart-broken look, which seems to say, that all hope is crushed out of your future life! Weep—weep! Tears will relieve you!"

"No," he replied; "tears are for the weak—the unworthy! Let *her* shed tears!—a life-time of misery would not atone for the ruin her heartless treachery has caused! Let her weep,—as she will—as she must! for surely, such iniquity will not go unpunished!—surely, some heavy judgment will fall upon her! And then she will remember her perfidy; and weep, when it is too late! I will live for it—I can bear life, with *that* hope before me! *She* will weep; but *I* shall laugh—shall exult!"

His excitement was fearful. His manner was almost hysterical.

"Oh, John! you do not mean that! I know you better, my dear child. If she met with any trouble, you would be the first, to pity and console her."

Now, he threw himself upon the ground, and burst into an agony of wild and passionate sobs. His mother knelt beside him; for a long time, vainly trying to calm him. At last, exhausted by the violence of the paroxysm, he grew calmer. When he again spoke, it was almost in a whisper—his voice was so faint and broken.

"Yes, yes—you speak truly.—I would lay down my life for her! I would crouch at her feet, like a dog, even though she spurned me! See—see!—how my tears flow for her, unworthy as she is!—Yet she is not to blame—she has been led by others. Poor child!—poor, dear child!"

"Nay, John—she is unworthy! She is heartless—worldly—unprincipled! Think of her in her true character; and you will cease to love her!"

"Never! never!" he passionately exclaimed. "Mother, don't blame her—I can't bear it!"

"You are very weak! She is undeserving!"

"God bless her! God bless her!" A long silence ensued; then he added, more gently,—

"My own dearest mother, we will talk no more on this subject. Let her be to us, as though she were dead. I shall, in time, conquer this weakness; but it will be long first. For the feelings of years, cannot be uprooted in a day; and my wound is so deep, that it will, I think, take years of quiet suffering, to even scar it over. But, do not fear; you shall yet be proud of your son; I will not sink down into a poor, maudlin, love-lorn fool. Whatever I may feel, I will act as becomes a man!"

And, from that day, Helen's name was not mentioned.



THE DAWN OF TROUBLE.

PASS we over some months ; and turn we to a brilliant *salon* in Belgravia.

Lights gleam, but not more brightly than the flashing eyes of the fair *danseuses* there assembled ; nor do the strains of music fall less pleasantly on the ear, than the ringing laughter, which comes from the light as well as heavy hearts in the gay throng.

Look at that fair girl, with the soft blue eyes, and madonna hair ! How sweetly she blushes !—How bewitching are those down-cast eyes, and the dimple in her soft and rounded cheek, as she listens to the honeyed words of the whiskered nonentity by her side ! Who would imagine, that her ear is drinking in words of tender devotion, that fall from the lips of another ?—words of love, addressed, not to her, but to a rival ; by one who, last season, seemed to exist in *her* presence only ! Yet her smile is none the less sweet ; and her companion thinks, that her blush and dimple are genuine, and that his whiskers are very irresistible ; and everyone remarks how well Lady Flora is looking to-night.

There is Mrs. Brabazon, dancing with—yes, positively !—with her *husband*, who adores her ; and who thinks her the very personification of anxious, conjugal love, because she declares that he looks pale, and she fears a return of his illness, and, therefore, insists upon his going home, instead of accompanying her to her next party (where she is to meet Captain Hansom !)

Look at good Mr. and Mrs. Jones! How fondly they gaze upon that pale youth—their son—and think him a paragon of sense and discretion; because he stands, a quiet looker-on, instead of dancing, which he votes “a bore.” He—gentle youth—is speculating on the coming “Derby,” with somewhat rueful forebodings of the result, and surmizes as to what ruse he can this time resort to, to induce his “old muff of a governor” to “stump up.” The “poor family in distress” has been tried too often. The “friend labouring hard to support an orphan sister,” can’t be done again. The best “dodge” will be, the “friend who has imposed on his credulity, and has disappeared, without leaving the slightest clue to his whereabouts.” Yes, that will do!

Oh! acting—acting! all acting! How few faces in that throng, serve as true mirrors to their accompanying souls!

Yes, one there is!—mark her well—for we have seen her before!—A faultless outline of face and form;—a complexion of velvet softness—dark, rich, glowing;—a *chevelure*, of unsurpassed magnificence;—a *toilette*, to heighten all these charms. Surely, the fortunate possessor of so many gifts of fortune, must be happy! Yes, she is, you say at first. But, gaze a little longer, and tell me;—are the quick, flashing eye, and the heightened colour, and the parted lips, evidences of happiness, or of feverish excitement? Why does she give such short, impatient answers, to the flattering nothings of the group of satellites who revolve round her wherever she goes? Why does her glance wander so restlessly through the crowd?

After a time, one approaches her, the sight of whom seems somewhat to calm the fever of her glance.

“Arthur, I am so tired! Do let us go home!”

“Home? nonsense, dear! we have two more engagements!—But we will go on, if you like.”

“Oh! yes,” she sighed, in a tone of patient resignation, but of such utter weariness! And they sought their carriage.

“How I wish this season were over,” she said, as they were driving along. “I am pining for the country—for quiet—for peace!”

Her tears were falling.

"Nonsense; you provoking little monkey!" he gaily interrupted, at the same time kissing her. "This is just the life for me! The country is stagnation—utter stagnation!"

"How excited you are!—It is partly that, that makes me dislike this sort of life;—it is not good for you, Arthur."

She meant more; but she did not say it. He laughed, in reply. The carriage stopped; and, in a few minutes, she was again the centre of a group of admirers. But her husband had left her; and it was once more for her, to watch him whirling in the dance—his cheek, flushed—his eyes, gleaming—his laugh, wild and frequent. At length, she despatched an envoy to him; and he obeyed the call.

"If you are not engaged, Arthur, we had better go. It is so late; and I am so very, very tired!" she timidly supplicated.

"Very well, dear," he replied; and again they started for the next scene of—gaiety, to *him*, but suffering, to her.

But the rain was falling; and the cool night air seemed to calm his excitement. He shivered. After a brief silence, he spoke, in an altered tone, quietly, and sadly,—

"What were you saying just now, Helen?"

"When?"

"A minute or two ago."

"In the ball-room?"

"No; since we left it."

"I have not spoken, Arthur!"

"Yes, indeed. You said something about the country, and quiet,—and this life not being good for me."

"Oh! that was on our way to the Ellsleys!"

"No, dear; you said it a minute ago."

She did not attempt to persuade him; she was but too well accustomed to his confusion of ideas, and want of memory. She replied,—

"I was saying, how I wished the season were over;—how I longed for the country;—how bad this life is, for you."

He sighed heavily; and drew her to his breast.

"Oh! Helen!—my soul!—to what a life have I condemned you! You must suffer, from either my wild gaiety, or my miserable, miserable fits of depression!"

She trembled; for these revulsions of feeling were even

more terrible to witness, than the excitement which preceded them.

"Dear Arthur," she timidly began, "I am very young, to understand these things—to speak on such a subject as this. But, bear with me, dear husband; for I must speak, or my heart will break! The weight has been pressing on it, so long!"

He held her from him; and gazed into her eyes, with a keen, wild, searching gaze. Then, he strained her to his heart, and burst out sobbing like a child.

"I loved you so passionately!—I tried to give you up!—I could not! I could not! Oh Helen!—my life! my life!"

"But, Arthur, dear love, it is not yet too late. You are young;—you can conquer this terrible habit—" She faltered. "—It is so degrading to you—to your fine intellect—your noble heart!"

He started; and again bent a searching gaze upon her. Then, he answered, more calmly,—

"You mean—you have discovered—that—"

She replied, "—Yes;—that my husband, whom I have so admired—so loved,—is a victim to the degrading vice of—"

"Of intemperance?" he asked.

She bowed her head. He remained silent. After a few moments, he let down the window, and desired the coachman to turn the horses, and drive home.

For some days after that scene, his depression lasted; but at length, he went with some friends to Epsom races; and when he returned, his wild manner made Helen regret that she had excused herself from accompanying him. This was but the prelude to a series of dinners and balls. Arthur's excitement had no chance of cooling down; but the terrible depression that was sure to result from the reaction, made her dread the cessation of his excitement.

A week passed. Helen was looking haggard and careworn; and feeling hopelessly wretched. How peaceful, now, seemed to her, the memory of her tranquil village home! How she longed for that little quiet room, with its low ceiling, and sloping walls! How she yet seemed to feel, the cool night breeze, blowing against her face as she leant out of her lat-

tice, to catch the last chimes of the old bells, and see the stars glimmer above the red house, and hear the breezy rustling of the leaves near her window!—Such music as she might never, never hear again!—For *her* Æolian harp was broken; and though the same air might play upon its shattered chords, the harmony would never more be awakened—never, never more!

And thus, her life was passing, in a dreary living-on from day to day;—enduring, struggling, despairing. But, one night, just as she was quitting a crowded ball-room, she caught a glimpse of a face that seemed familiar to her; some pleasant memory seemed to be connected with it; and after she returned home, she tried to remember to whom the face belonged. At last it struck her.—It was Grace Willingham;—Grace, who had long ago warned Helen against the very fate that had since fallen upon her!

"Arthur," she said to her husband, "I cannot imagine why your cousin has not let us know she is in town."

"Oh!" he replied, in evident embarrassment, "she and I were never the best friends in the world. Besides, I want to cut all my relations;—I am not over-fond of family gatherings."

"But Arthur, I like Grace. I wish you would find out her address."

"Well, well—all in good time," he answered rather impatiently; and in a tone of voice that convinced Helen, he had no intention of complying with her request.

The next day, however, Grace was announced; and, as Helen was going out for a drive, and wished to have her all to herself, she asked Grace to accompany her.

For awhile, there was a little embarrassment between the two, both talking on indifferent subjects; but at last, Grace broke the ice, by saying,—

"Why did you not let me know you were in town?"

"We were not aware you were here," was Helen's reply.

"Arthur was," persisted her friend. "It is true, we have been here a few days only; but, for all that, he might have sent his address!"

Helen did not repeat what he had said on the subject of "family gatherings." Grace continued:—

"I procured your address from Mrs. Cockburn, at whose house I saw you last night. Helen, you did not look happy!"

"Oh! yes—yes—I *am* happy!" she eagerly interrupted. "Arthur is kindness itself!"

"I am sincerely glad of it, dear," replied Grace. "And now," she continued, with some hesitation, "I must allude to a subject, the remembrance of which, gives me much pain;—our conversation at Staniswood."

Helen coloured, in painful embarrassment. At last she mustered courage to reply,—

"Yes, Grace; you spoke the truth. Poor Arthur!"

"Helen, dear, if I again allude to that conversation, it is for the purpose of begging you not to attach too much importance to what I then said; but, to do your best for poor Arthur, and leave the rest to God."

"I will, Grace—I will!"

"And, Helen, get him away as soon as possible. Get him into the pure, fresh, country air. Give him simple pursuits. Let him keep early hours. Try to gain more influence over him;—to calm—to soothe."

"Oh! if I could, Grace!—if I could!" she exclaimed, despairingly.

"Ask help from a Higher Source, dear Helen!"

"I cannot! I never loved religion—I never, from my heart, prayed to God in my happiness (at least, only when I was very, very young); and now, He hides His face from me!"

"He never hides His face from those who seek Him in earnest, dear Helen. Has He not said, 'Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?'"

"Yes; but those words were addressed to those who had served and loved him."

"Nay; *they* had *already* come unto Him. They had already taken His yoke upon them, and learnt of Him, and found rest unto their souls. The invitation was addressed to those, who had not as yet served and loved Him;—to the wide world! And he says, 'I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.'"

"Grace, it's of no use. I fear my heart is very hard. I feel no real interest in religion. Sometimes—sometimes—I feel as if——" she burst into tears.

"'As if' what, my dear?"

"As if I should be eternally lost, unless God sent me some horrible punishment, in order to wean me from my love of the world."

"Do not make it necessary for Him to do so, Helen. Turn to him at once. Pray—pray for help!"

"I cannot! When I pray, I feel no warmth—no love. I do not feel as if God heard me!"

"But He does, Helen! He does! He may not answer the first, nor the second, nor the third prayer; but, persevere, and you will be helped at last!"

How beautiful Grace's plain face had become, within the last few moments!

"Besides," continued Helen, blushing deeply, and turning her eyes full upon her friend, "it would be so cowardly, to turn to Him in my adversity, and not in my prosperity!—So mean!"

"Helen, we are *all* mean, before Him—in comparison with His awful power and might! But, is it not natural for us, to turn for help to our Heavenly Father, when we are in distress; just as we turn to our earthly parent, for consolation in sorrow?"

Helen mused. Grace went on.

"Remember the parable of the widow who applied to the judge for assistance;—how he refused to listen to her first application, yet yielded to her repeated importunity. Is not that, sufficient encouragement to us, 'Always to pray, and not to faint?'"

"But," said Helen, in some confusion, "I do not sincerely *repent* of having neglected my duty to God.—I am anxious, and un—no, not unhappy, but—fearful; for I don't seem to see my future life lying so clear before me, as I expected. Therefore, I feel inclined to ask God's help to clear away the clouds, and to brighten my path for me. But I know, that if I were again happy—if Arthur were once more as I would have him be, I—I should serve God no better than I did before."

"You think so, Helen; but I hope you are mistaken. I

cannot imagine it possible for you to desert the only source of comfort, after you have once tasted of its efficacy; and, rely upon it, even were Arthur to be again all that you wish, some *other* trouble would be sent you—in mercy—for the saving of your soul. Suppose a poor blind and deaf man were walking rapidly towards a precipice, and you had no other way of arresting his course, than by throwing a stone, which would, perhaps, shatter one of his limbs; would not such an act, be a merciful one?"

Helen sighed heavily; for she felt the truth of Grace's words.

After that day, the two were much together; and Helen's joy at the close of the season, and the prospect of going to Staniswood, was somewhat marred, by her parting with her friend. Not, for long, did they meet again; but the "seed" had not been scattered "by the wayside," nor "upon stony places," nor "among thorns." Grace's words fell into "good ground," though their fruit did not immediately appear.



MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

WITH what pride did Mrs. Grey behold, from the window of one of the rooms allotted to her at Staniswood, the approach of the handsome travelling carriage, drawn by four splendid bays. And as Helen, languidly leaning on her husband's arm, entered the drawing-room, the mother commented upon her daughter's improved looks ;—langour and dejection being, with her, the synonyme for "aristocratic bearing."

Mrs. Huntingdon gazed anxiously on Helen ; and then, glanced quickly at her son. The scrutiny, however, seemed to satisfy her.

"Helen is not looking so blooming, as she looked when she left Brockley. Fashion's votaries pay dearly for their worship, do they not ?" she asked, addressing Mrs. Grey.

"But, that which my sweetest child has lost in mere rustic bloom, she has gained in elegance of appearance," was the mother's rejoinder.

"True ; but we must try to freshen her up a little, poor child ! She must keep early hours—live quietly—be much in the open air."

And Helen did "freshen up ;" for the change of life operated, through Arthur, upon her. Again they walked, like lovers, along the shady paths, and sat beside the sparkling brook, and had quiet, peaceful talks. And the colour was returning to Helen's cheek ; and her laugh was almost as light, and her step almost as elastic, as before. But at last, she began to fear, that Arthur was becoming tired of a life,

that was to her so pleasant. He seemed dull and listless ; and she could read, in his mother's anxious looks, that her fears were not imaginary. How she sighed, at this fresh proof of her own inability to supply that excitement, without which, she began to think, his life was insupportable to him !

One day, however, he came in, with flushed cheek, and sparkling eye, to tell her, that some amateur races were being got up, and that he had entered his horse, and meant to ride him. His mother's quick look of alarm, and half-uttered exclamation,—“For God's sake, Arthur, don't think of it!” were but the echo of Helen's fears ; and her blanched cheek, and trembling lip, attracted the notice of her husband.

“What ? little trembling mouse !” he said, fondly drawing her towards him. “And is it afraid some naughty great cat will run away with its dear hubby, and eat him up ?”

But she could not laugh. The thought of the excitement it would cause him—of the gaieties to which it would be the prelude—made her heart sink within her. She had hoped, that here, at all events, no temptation would fall in his way. She was sadly disappointed ; and pressed her cheek more closely against his, lest he should see her tears. He felt them, though, and, lifting up the piteous face, asked,—

“What do you fear, darling ?—That I shall get hurt ? Why, this will not be the first match, by many, that I shall have ridden, you little coward !”

“No, indeed,” chimed in Mrs. Grey ; “and I'm sure, my love, you ought to feel gratified, by the admiration Mr. Arthur will excite—with his handsome face and noble figure !—and he, such a splendid rider !”

“Nonsense, mamma !” was Helen's impatient reply.

Mrs. Grey used the “tears ahoy !” signal, and left the room—an injured mother ; and when Helen, who immediately followed, joined her, she was favoured by sundry quotations from King Lear, relating to serpents' teeth, &c. ; and it was long, ere she could be pacified.

“And, to think how I have struggled for this child !” pursued the lady, in a soliloquy, as though the object of it were not present. “To think, of all that I have gone through for her sake ! How I used to pinch, and screw, in every way ; that she might make a suitable appearance, and marry well !

And now, from the elevation to which, by the sacrifice of myself, I have raised her, she looks down upon, and despises, her mother.

"But mamma——"

"Yes," persisted Mrs. Grey, with a movement of her arms, as though she were swimming,—by which action, she intended to tipify her mental sweeping away, and utter demolition, of any arguments her daughter might bring forward in extenuation of her conduct—"Yes—tells her, that she is a fool! Well, well, perhaps she was, when, for that too dear child's sake, she abandoned the idea of—of an advantageous settlement for herself;—when she, in promoting that dear one's happiness, lost one hundred pounds a-year, which old Stub immediately knocked off her income!—By the bye, did I tell you of that, my love?" inquired the lately afflicted parent, with a rapid transition from the heroic to the everyday style. "The old wretch absolutely had the impertinence to write and inform me, that he considered one hundred a year a sufficient income for me, now that you were married; for that, of course, a woman of *my* age would lead a quiet, simple life, and would not relish the pleasures (with their attendant expenses) which were necessary for, and suitable to, a young girl. 'At *my* age!' think of that, my dear!"

"He doesn't know how young you look, mamma," said Helen, pleased with the turn the subject had taken. "But, indeed, since my marriage has entailed this loss, I shall feel miserable, unless you let me make it up in some way or other. Since you will not make our home yours—" (Mrs. Grey had, for some reason or other, invariably refused to visit her daughter, except at Staniswood, and in company with her friend, Letitia)—"you must—you *shall*—let me make you as comfortable as possible, in your own way. Now, tell me, dear mamma, what comforts are most necessary to you?"

"Since you are so pressing, my dear, I must confess, that I have been annoyed and grieved—in fact, I may say, almost broken-hearted—by the cruel, unjust remarks, that have been levelled at you in Brockley, my dearest love. Now, would you believe it?—in their nasty spite and envy at your good fortune, they have the audacity to assert, that your head is quite turned by your sudden elevation, and that your thoughts

are so entirely bestowed on yourself, that you forget your poor mother, and leave her to her lonely widowhood—to struggle on as she can, on her miserable pittance!"

"Let them say it!" exclaimed Helen, indignantly. "I don't care for their slander!—But, indeed, mamma, if you *would* allow me to render your life easier and pleasanter, I should feel so happy! This wealth, which I once so longed for, gives me no pleasure. Often—often, it but serves to mock my unhappiness!"

"My dearest child! What can you mean? 'Unhappiness'—with a young and handsome husband, who is devoted to you!—with unlimited means for enjoying all the luxuries of life!—with beauty enough, to render every woman you meet miserable! My dear child, what can *you* have, to make you unhappy?"

"What, indeed?" Helen hastily interrupted. "I am very ungrateful! Truly do they say, that we never value that which we possess!—But, to return to the subject, mamma. Arthur is most liberal to me—too much so, indeed, for he is always scolding me for not spending more money on myself. But I don't care for money now;—it cannot buy the only thing worth having—tranquility!"

"Yet, love, it can purchase a very good substitute," argued her mother, in a playful tone.

"But tell me now, mamma.—Suppose you were suddenly to inherit a fortune;—what would be the first thing you would do?"

"I would immediately purchase that exquisite little second-hand pony-chaise, now on sale at Wingram's, at Hapsley; the ponies, too, are to be had, a perfect bargain!" cried Mrs. Grey, with prompt enthusiasm.

Helen's face brightened. "And what would be the *next* thing, mamma?"

"I would immediately engage a genteel youth, who could attend to, and drive, the equipage, and answer the bell, and occasionally wait at table."

"And after that, dear mamma?"

"Well love, our drawing-room wants refurnishing;—I would refurnish the drawing-room."

"There, you dear, silly mamma! you have fallen into m

trap!" cried Helen, with more animation than she had exhibited for a long time. "You shall have the pony-chaise, and the page; and the drawing-room shall be refurnished! Oh! I am so glad!"

"Dear enthusiast!" exclaimed Mrs. Grey. "But no—I cannot accept of your generosity, my sweet love;—not even for the sake of silencing your enemies!—No, I cannot!"

But, in a few days, Mrs. Grey was informed that the coveted treasures were hers. One more scene of reluctance and maternal gratitude; and no more was said.

"I wish you had brought Marty with you, mamma," sighed Helen, one day.

"My love," her mother mildly remonstrated, "Marty is such a Goth!—worse than ever, I assure you!"

So Helen was obliged to submit. But she wrote a long and affectionate letter; which letter, was wrapped up in two pocket-handkerchiefs, and deposited by Marty in a drawer, in company with some dried lavender.



XLIV

DREAD.

ALL Arthur's listlessness had vanished; for, despite Helen's and his mother's entreaties, he persisted in his determination to enter his horse, and ride, at the coming races. Each day Helen grew sadder and sadder; for she felt keenly, that *she* was not enough to fill her husband's heart. Any excitement, however trivial, proved sufficient to draw him away from her. Every morning, as soon as breakfast was over, he would rise from the table, bestow on her a hasty kiss, and then hurry away to join his racing friends, or to try "Sultan" on the course; seldom returning, until just in time for the seven o'clock dinner—sometimes, not even then.

For some days, Helen's sad looks were her only remonstrance; but, at last, she ventured to appeal to him in words.

"Confound it! where's my whip now?" he exclaimed, one morning; as, in a fever of impatience and excitement, he hurried back into the room. "I'm sure I left it in the stand yesterday," he continued, still more impatiently, and with an irritable glance at his young wife. "Somehow, one never finds things where one leaves them, in *this* house!"

"I saw it in the dressing-room this morning, Arthur," pleaded Helen, in answer to his impatient look.

"Pshaw! I didn't put it there!" And he sprang upstairs, three steps at a time, in quest of the missing article.

Helen followed him. As she entered the dressing-room, he was just leaving it, with the whip in his hand.

"I have it. You need not have troubled yourself!" he said; and he was passing her.

But she gently detained him.—

"Arthur, dear, do listen to me for a moment! I see so little of you now!"

"I can't stop now—I shall be late, as it is!"

And, again bestowing on her his hasty kiss, he left her.

She sat down, and wept hopelessly.

"Alone, here!—No one loves me!—no one understands me!—Not one friend to help me—to advise me! I, who thought I should be so happy; for he seemed to love me so dearly;—and so he does still, sometimes—sometimes! But he wearies of me here, with no one but me to talk to. Perhaps, as he says, a life of gaiety suits him best, after all. I saw more of him in town;—I almost wish I were back there again! Are all marriages like this, I wonder?—and do all men tire of their wives, so soon?"

Then she fell into deep thought.

Her memory flew back to the quiet, despised village. She pictured to herself, her little room, with its latticed window; whence she used to gaze, at night upon the deep blue sky, spangled with its golden dust. And she seemed yet to see the outline of the old house, standing out against the moonlight—the dear, dear old house! And there came before her mind's vision, a good, thoughtful face; and, even yet, she seemed to hear the accents of the kind voice—the voice of him, from whom she was separated, by a barrier as strong as death!

She started. What thoughts were these? Did she regret? Did she think that she had chosen the shadow, and cast away the substance? Did she wish herself back, in the once despised little village, with the same chance of happiness before her? No—no; she would not think;—she would hope, if she could, even against hope.

"He is young, now," she thought. "He will soon wear out this love of excitement. He will settle down quietly; and we shall be happy at last, if I am but patient!"

Patient! Yes, Helen was at last learning that sovereign virtue, to which she had been all her life a stranger. Sorrow was already teaching her one lesson—to be patient. Yes,

poor girl! and you must learn to be "long-suffering," and "meek," and "gentle," and "humble," ere you can walk in the only road that leads to the goal your heart has ever been seeking, and has never found;—happiness!

"How well Arthur is looking!" exclaimed Mrs. Grey, soon after Helen had entered the drawing-room.

"Very," Mrs. Huntingdon drily answered. Her friend continued,—

"I am sure I have every reason to bless Providence for my child's happiness. Now, what right had I to expect, that Helen, with such very slight worldly advantages, would marry so far better than Lucy Howard, whose matrimonial chances seemed much more promising than hers?"

"Lucy?—is she going to be married?" asked Helen.

"Yes, my dear; I forgot to mention it. I thought it would not interest you."

"*Everything* relating to—to Brockley, interests me!" she replied, turning pale and red by turns.

"Indeed, love?—I should not have believed it possible! But, yes—Lucy is engaged to be married; and to that booby, Mr. Harwood!"

"I liked him very much, mamma; and am very, very glad Lucy has chosen so well."

"*Well*, child? Why, the Harwoods are not rich!"

"People may be happy, without money, mamma; and very, very miserable, with it!" she tremblingly replied.

Mrs. Huntingdon scanned her sharply.

"What nonsense, love!" said Mrs. Grey.—"The first time I have heard *you* give utterance to so Utopian a sentiment! but I think it is becoming the fashion, for those who have money, to affect to despise it!"

"Say, rather, mamma, that everything looks more valuable, in prospect, than it really is. The possession of a thing, is the test of its worth; and that, only, which gives happiness, is of real value!"

"Well, love, *you* have both money, and happiness; so we need not argue the subject."

Helen stifled a sigh; and again thought to herself,—

"No one here, understands me!"

Arthur did not return to dinner that day. When he did

come home, it was late; he had been dining with some friends. The betting had run high; and his flushed cheek, and gleaming eyes, made Helen shrink from him, with something very like disgust.

The next day, was fixed for the races.



XLV

THE RACE.

"SULTAN's in capital order!—sure to win, I think! As for me, I think I could fly! Mind you are there in time, if I don't see you before then!" shouted Arthur, rushing into the room next morning, dashing down his hat, and then seizing it again, as if for a fresh start.

Helen rose. She threw her arms round his neck, and clung to him despairingly.

"Arthur—Arthur—I know it is too late now, to prevent your riding; but oh! do—*do* be careful! Do try to calm this excessive excitement! In your present state, you are not fit to ride!"

And, pressing her cheek against his, she looked imploringly in his face.

He passed his hand across his brow, and clasped her to his heart.

"Poor Helen! Poor girl! I am a wretch, to make you so anxious! But I can't help it!—When this is over, we will be quiet again love—indeed, we will!"

But, even while attempting to soothe her, his quick, nervous manner, told her, that he was thinking more of the race-course, than of her.

"Arthur, dear," she pleaded, "your brow is like fire!—Naughty fellow!—you should have come home sooner last night!" she playfully added. "Come into our room; and let me bathe your forehead."

He allowed himself to be led there; and she patiently

bathed and fanned his heated brow. It seemed to calm him; and when he rose, to leave her, he smiled very sadly, and, fondly kissing her, said,—

"I don't deserve your love, my Helen! You would have been happier, if—"

"Hush! hush!" she interrupted, "I *am* happy! How can I help being so, when you speak to me as you have just done? All married people have their troubles; and life was never intended to flow on, in one unbroken stream of enjoyment. There are *some* rainy days, in every summer! Go now, dear;—and oh! do be careful!"

She turned away, to hide her tear-filled eyes; but he saw the movement, and returned.

"It is too late to get out of it now, Helen; but I wish, from my soul, I were not going!"

"Well you promise—~~promise~~—to keep as quiet as possible, Arthur, and not to—"

"Not to imbibe anything, stronger than lemonade, or ginger-beer,—eh?" he asked, with a laugh. "Yes, I promise. And now, good-bye again, my own darling; for I have but one hour before me, and have much to see to."

He was gone. But Helen felt more easy; for, had he not *promised*?

An hour later, they had taken their places on the stand, and were gazing, with mingled emotions, on the scene before them.

Mrs. Grey's feelings were of unmixed satisfaction. She that day rejoiced in a resplendent costume, and felt, no doubt, that she and Helen were mistaken for sisters. "Ah!" she thought, "if Mr. Nubley" (the bald old gentleman) "could see me now, the thing would be done!"

Helen's anxiety began to revive; for she could not see Arthur anywhere. She felt disappointed; for he had promised to see her before he mounted.

Mrs. Huntingdon chatted gaily with her surrounding friends; but a keen observer would have noticed, that even her habitual self-possession was sorely taxed; that, though her *mouth* smiled, her *brow* was now and then contracted; and that her eyes wandered restlessly among the crowd.

Helen's spirits fell lower and lower; for there was a stir

made, to clear the ground, and the clerk of the course soon passed them at a hand-gallop. Then, in a little while, came one of the gentlemen riders, mounted on a spirited grey. One by one, they passed, and repassed.

Poor Helen! She breathed one sigh of disappointment, and then suddenly leant forward, as a cry of, "That's the favourite! That's Sultan!" greeted her ear.

Yes, Arthur had mounted! She glanced nervously at him. That glance was enough. She had never beheld him so excited. His eyes flashed, as they had never before done; and she knew, by the dilated nostril, and tightly-compressed lip, how his pulses were beating, and at what a fearful rate his blood was rushing through his veins.

Mrs. Huntingdon was pale as death; she took Helen's hand in hers.

"I wish you had not come, my dear. This is far too exciting for you. I warned you, what it would be!"

"Yes; but he is such a good rider!" she timidly remonstrated; as much for her own encouragement, as for that of her friend.

There was a sudden hush in the crowd, and an anxious leaning forward. Then, there was a cry of, "They're off! They're off!" and the horses dashed past them.

Helen felt sick, and, for a moment, closed her eyes.

"Look, my dear! Look! He is riding steadily! Thank Heaven, there are no leaps!" whispered Mrs. Huntingdon. And Helen bent forward, to watch the race.

Arthur was evidently making some effort at self-control; for Sultan was kept well in hand, and the race was very even.

"That dear Sultan!" she said to Mrs. Huntingdon. "How glad I am, that *he* carries Arthur! He is so sure, and knows Arthur so well."

For the next half minute, they continued to watch in silence. Then Helen asked, in a trembling whisper,—

"What is he about? Surely—I don't understand such things; but—surely it is too soon, to give Sultan the rein! He can't be running away?"

"Great Heaven!" muttered Mrs. Huntingdon. Her face was perfectly ghastly.

"What is the matter? Do tell me, for pity's sake!" pleaded Helen, clinging to her.

But the other made no reply. She leant forward, with the same blank look of horror in her eyes.

"Yes," she still muttered, "yes; it may be only an error in judgment. Besides, two-thirds of the course are cleared. But, why push the poor beast so hard? He will kill the horse! What need, to distance them so soon?"

There was a shout of, "They're coming! They're coming!" and Sultan appeared, immeasurably in advance of his competitors.

No wonder that the noble beast put forth all his energies; for his rider, looking more like a devil than a man,—his cap gone—his hair streaming wildly behind,—was lashing him furiously, jerking the reins, and shouting and yelling at the top of his voice. The race was already his; but, instead of slackening his speed, he rushed, like an avalanche, past the winning-post, and, deviating from the course, continued at the same headlong rate.

"He can't hold him! He can't hold him!" cried Helen, wringing her hands, in agony.

She felt Mrs. Huntingdon lean heavily on her shoulder; and was only just in time to save her from falling. That calm, self-possessed, unimpassioned woman of the world, had fainted! But Helen, leaving her to the care of Mrs. Grey, again leant forward; for there was a cry of, "Is he thrown?" and the crowd were hurrying in the direction taken by Arthur.

Mrs. Grey's cares soon restored Mrs. Huntingdon to consciousness. Her first words were, "What has happened? Where is he? Have they stopped him?"

But the crowd were returning very slowly, bearing something in the midst of them.

"What is it? Is it one of the horses?" gasped Helen, to one of the foremost of the crowd.

"No; the horse is killed. It's the rider, they're bringing," was the answer.

She did not scream, nor faint. Every faculty of her being seemed merged in her sight; and that was rivetted on one spot in the crowd. It opened; they bore their burden

nearer—close! She knew, whose was that gory, inanimate form! She fell upon her knees beside it, and frantically cried, "Not dead? Not dead?" and cast her wild, appealing glances, towards the crowd.

"Poor thing!" said some of them; "it's his wife! if *she* can't keep him from the bottle, what will?"

A gentleman pushed his way through the bystanders; he was a doctor. He felt the pulse, and laid his hand on the heart.

"He is not dead," he said to Helen.

"Oh! Thank God! Thank God!" she cried; and broke into a hysterical fit of weeping.

If she could have lifted the veil from the dim future, would she have thanked God so fervently?

Alas! "Who knoweth what is good for man in this life; all the days of this vain life, which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?"



XLVI

A DEAR OLD FRIEND.

FOR the first time in her life, Helen *prayed*! Yes, for the *first* time! It is true, that she had seldom, even in her gayest moments, passed a day, without offering up a *form* of prayer; but never, until now, had she really prayed; never had she felt, that she was utterly helpless, and that nothing less than Heavenly aid could avail her. Truly had she averred, that nothing, short of some heavy blow, could make her turn, heart and soul, to the only real source of comfort.

"Incessantly did she pray,—*"Spare him, Lord! Spare him! I have sinned—I have not deserved Thy mercy; but oh! spare him; and I will serve Thee all the rest of my life!"*

Poor child! she knew not yet, *how* to pray! She had not learnt to say,—*"Thy will be done! Teach me to know Thy will—to submit, even while my heart is breaking!"* No—her only prayer was, that her husband's life might be spared. She forgot his faults—forgot all the anxiety he had caused her; she remembered only his good qualities. And she still cried, *"Oh! spare him! Spare him!"*

The prayer was granted—Alas! for him, and for her!

She had not been allowed to see him, except at rare intervals, when his delirium had left him too far exhausted, for him to be excited by her presence; but she had laid herself down on the ground, outside his door, and had heard her own name mingled with his incoherent ravings. How differently he now pronounced it! It was music to her ear.

At last, permitted to be with him, she was seated beside his bed. His head rested on her arm.

"Helen, my own!—kiss me!"

She bent down, and her tears fell, like rain, upon the pillow.

"I have been very ill, I know," he continued, in his poor, weak voice; "and I am afraid you have been sadly tried! I can't see you, love;—the room is so dark!"

"Yes, dear Arthur; and it must be kept so, for the present."

"But, how long have I been ill?—and what has been the matter with me? I can't remember what has happened,—for a long, long time. I wish I could!—Oh! how my head aches!"

"You must not *think*, dear; and the doctor allowed me to see you, on one condition only;—you were not to talk. I will sit here, and hold your hand; and, perhaps, you will sleep.

"You won't leave me, Helen?" he pleaded.

"No, love; I have longed too much to be with you, willingly to leave you!"

"Oh, Helen, I have had such horrid dreams! You were in them all; and cruel fiends were trying to tear you from me! I was chained down to the ground, and could not move; and I thought, that flames shot from my eyes, and scorched you whenever I looked at you!"

"Don't think of it, dearest Arthur. What is there in a dream? There! lay your head on my arm. I can't leave you now!"

He slept.

What visions of her future life, did Helen weave, during that long sleep! How did she picture to herself, the happy home that would be hers, when her husband, taking warning by the terrible lesson that had been sent to him, would shun the hateful vice, which had so nearly brought him to an untimely grave, and made her life desolate.

"How he loves me! Yes, even when I was secretly accusing him of being tired of me, he loved me as well as ever! Ah! never, never again, can I doubt his love! But there will be no cause; for I am certain he is cured of his terrible

habit—his one, only fault. Dear Arthur! Dear, dear Arthur!

When he awoke, it was night.

"Helen, love"—his voice was not quite so weak as it had been—"Helen love, how long have you been here? Dear child! how tired you must be!"

"'Tired?' Oh! no, Arthur! To-day I feel more rested than I have felt for a long while. I am resting from anxiety!"

"But, go now, and lie down. Try to sleep.—Nay, you must—I will have it! And, send my mother to me!"

She obeyed, and, fairly worn-out, slept, almost as soon as her head touched the pillow. She did not wake, till late the next morning. Starting up, her first question was, "How is Arthur?" for she heard a step advancing, and thought it was her maid.

Oh! joy—surprise! It was Marty!

"Marty! Marty! My dear, dear Marty! How glad I am!—how glad!"

"Then you ain't angry with me, for comin' of my own accord?"

"Angry? Oh! Marty, what could have pleased me more? But, have you heard how he is, this morning?"

"Yes, my dear; he's doing nicely; and he's very glad you've had a sleep; and he told them to be sure and go soft, so as not to wake you."

"Dear fellow! Oh, Marty! he's so good—and loves me so dearly!"

"Bless him for it, then! He's a fine young gentleman, though he's terrible pulled-down, now."

"Ah! if you had seen him a fortnight ago, Marty!" and she shuddered. "But now, I must get up; for I long to see him. Marty, dear, what long talks you and I will have together!"

And, that evening, they had the first of their long talks; for the breeze came blowing so refreshingly into the room of the invalid, that he insisted on Helen's going for a stroll in the grounds. As he would take no denial, she unwillingly complied; and asked Marty to accompany her.

"Well, Marty," she began, "what in the world put it into your head, to come here?"

"Why, you see, my darling—Dear! dear! what a beautiful gownd you've got on, to be sure! Dont'ee sit down on it! Now, do'ee take it up around of you, there's a dear!" entreated Marty; as Helen carelessly threw herself down on a bank by the water's side. "Ah, well! when you was at Brockley—"

"I should have worn this dress to evening parties, and rubbed it with a handkerchief on my return home; and then, after turning it inside out, have hung it up in the ward—no, I had'nt a wardrobe—the cupboard. Eh?"

"Bless her! she remembers all about Brockley—the dear!" exclaimed Marty, in a sort of rapture.

"And why should I not? Were not my happiest days passed there? Dear, dear Brockley!"

"No, you don't mean that, my precious! You hadn't no Mr. Arthur there, you know!"

"But I was young then, Marty," Helen sadly replied; "and felt, as I shall never feel again."

"Hear her talk!—when it's but a twelvemonth ago!"

Helen sighed. In experience; those twelvemonths had, to her, been a life-time.

"But I was a 'goin' to tell you, how it was, I come here. You see, when your dear, sweet, kind, pretty letter come, and when you said how much you wished I'd come with Missis, I just put a few things together in a hankicher, and started off to come here."

"What—on foot?"

"Yes, my dear."

Helen could not help laughing.

"But when I'd walked a couple of miles, or so, I thought, all of a sudden, 'why, there's nobody left to mind the house!' So I turned about again; and when I got back, I took my things out of the hankicher, and sat down, and had a good cry."

"Poor Marty!"

"Well, I tried to get it out of my head. I thinks to myself,—'why, you good-for-nothing thing, how can you think of goin' for to disgrace your Missis, and your young Missis, too, with your vulgar ways, among all them there fine folks!' But then I thinks to myself,—'But my dear won't be ashamed of her poor o'd Marty!'"

"That's right, Marty! No one understands me better than you do!"

"But still I kep' a 'puttin of it off; till, all of a sudden, there comes a hopper-skipper of a boy, as calls hisself a 'page,' and says as how he was engaged by Missis. 'So,' thinks I, 'Missis must be comin' home, and I'll be off at once; for I must see my precious, if it's only for a day!' So I got mother to take care of the house; and here I am, my dear!"

And you are a dear old soul, for coming! How I wish you had come sooner!—For I have been very, very wretched, Marty, and have had no one to console me!"

Marty did not inquire, what Mrs. Grey had been doing; for she knew, instinctively, that there was not much *consolation* in Mrs. Grey's discourse.

"Yes, Marty, I thought I should have gone mad, spending days and nights at his door, and not being allowed to see him—'For fear of exciting him,' they said; but, if that was their only reason, why did they want to get me away from his door?—Besides, he would not have recognised me; so, how could my presence have excited him? Oh, no! it would have soothed, rather; and it was cruel—cruel of them! Their real reason was, they did not want me to hear his ravings—they thought I should be too much frightened. Oh, Marty! it was so terrible to hear him raving about me; declaring that he was chained down in a horrible dungeon, and could not get to me! And he thought, poor fellow! that I shunned him—fled from him. Then I learnt how dearly he loved me, Marty, and how his thoughts had been ever with me, even while I had fancied they were occupied by other things.—But I must go in now; for I have been out a whole hour—long enough to satisfy him."

As they entered the house, they encountered Mrs. Grey, to whom Marty had not yet summoned courage to present herself.

"Why, you impertinent creature! Well, I declare—am I awake?—Will you have the goodness to tell me, my dear, whether I am awake?"

Helen having answered in the affirmative, Mrs. Grey continued,—

"How dare you, Marty—how dare you disobey my orders?"

"I couldn't live no longer Mum, without a sight of Miss Helen!" pleaded Marty, in humble tones.

"There, now—don't fly into a passion! You are the most passionate creature in the world! I really tremble at your temper; which may, one day, lead you to commit murder, or some other horrible crime! You leave my service, this day month!"

"Very well, Mum!"



MR. BROOKS AGAIN.

ARTHUR was progressing rapidly towards recovery, and was ordered to go to the sea-side. Mrs. Grey was about to return to Brockley.

It was the evening before her departure—a wet, miserable evening. No one could go out; and a restraint was imposed upon the whole party, by the presence of Mr. Brooks, who had unexpectedly arrived.

Arthur did not appear much prepossessed in favour of the new-comer; and seemed delighted, when the evening came to a close, and he wished him good-night; yet he treated the intruder with the greatest apparent cordiality. Mrs. Huntingdon seemed more than glad—absolutely delighted—to see him.

When Helen was alone with her husband, she asked him,—

“Arthur, have you ever quarrelled with Mr. Brooks?”

“No, love. How absurd!”

“Then, why do you dislike him?”

“Dislike him? you silly child! I think him a capital fellow; and I shall ask him to visit us in town.”

“I thought, dear Arthur, we were going to live so quietly! I do not want visitors!” she replied, in a tone of keen disappointment.

“Nor do I, love; but, you see, Brooks is such an old friend of my mother’s—we must be attentive to him.”

Helen sighed, and began to dislike Mr. Brooks. Arthur continued,—

"I would far rather be alone with my little wife; but we can't always do as we like."

She brightened up a little; and began to reflect, that they would be away at the sea-side for some time, and that Mr. Brooks might not accept their invitation to follow them to London.

The next day, Mrs. Grey and Marty took their departure; Mrs. Grey, with her handkerchief pressed to her eyes, to hide the tears that were *not* in them,—Marty, with two water-courses streaming down her honest cheeks.

After they were gone, Mrs. Huntingdon carried off the obnoxious visitor, for a walk; whereat Helen rejoiced greatly, as she and Arthur had a long, lover-like ramble in the beautiful grounds, and discussed their plans;—she, with all the growing enthusiasm of her buoyant nature,—he, with a certain quiet melancholy, which had, of late, become habitual to him.

"And, how I do wish you were well and strong again, and had recovered all—no, not *all*, but some, of your old spirits, Arthur dear."

He sighed heavily.

"Why do you sigh so?" she asked, tenderly drawing his face down to hers; "and why do you look so sad? Are you thinking of the past? Oh, Arthur! let that be forgotten—gone for ever! I have no dread of the future!"

She spoke joyously. Her eyes were bright. There was a happy dimple in her cheek.

He turned away, and groaned heavily.

"Dear, Arthur! you are ill! Let us go in.—You must lie down, and rest!"

"No, love; I am as well here, as anywhere. Don't notice me—don't question me; it only makes me more unhappy."

"Arthur, I *know* that that man disquiets you! It is useless for you to explain it, by telling me, that before we were engaged, you had led so wild and reckless a life, as to induce him to believe, that you would make any girl wretched if she married you; and that that was why he tried to persuade your mother, that it was better we should part.—No, no!—There is some secret, between you and him!—Yes, a secret! and you conceal it from me!" she reproachfully added.

The next moment, she regretted having spoken thus; for he turned sharply upon her, saying,—

"Helen, remember, that a wife's *first* duty is, *submission*! I command you, never again to revert to this subject! Once more, I tell you, that Brooks is no more to me than I have said—an old friend of my mother's."

She felt hurt. Arthur had never before spoken thus to her. They walked on in silence. At last, he again spoke, in his usual tone of gentle sadness—

"My little darling is hurt at what I said? Let her believe, that her husband never speaks to her, but in the deepest love—the tenderest concern for her welfare!"

"I know it, Arthur, and I will try to obey you; but it is hard, to be thought unworthy of your confidence!"

"But if, I have no confidence to bestow, love?—I have no secrets from you.—Ah! there is Brooks, with my mother. They are having one of their eternal *confabs* about old times. Let us join them."

"What do you think, Arthur?" asked his mother as they met; "Mr. Brooks is going to Brighton for his health; so, as you also are going there, you may as well journey thither in company."

A bright flush crossed her son's face. A cloud came over Helen's, as he replied,—

"We shall be delighted—shall we not, Helen?"

Forgetting even common politeness, she remained silent; determined, not to utter one word, that should seal her fate. Mr. Brooks, however, equally determined, would not take offence; but proceeded to inquire of Arthur, when they would start.

"The day after to-morrow," he replied.

"That will just suit me," said Brooks.

And, the next day but one, they started.



DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.

THE day following Mrs. Grey's arrival at Brookley, the neighbours were surprised, by seeing all her blinds drawn down; and when they called, they were informed (by a page in a mourning suit) that,—

"My lady can't see anyone for a week, by reason of a death in the family."

Then, Marty was besieged with questions, to which she returned such short answers, that the curious could get nothing out of her; but it gradually became known, through Madame Delorme, the Hapsley milliner, of whom Mrs. Grey had ordered her mourning, that, "in consequence of the death of a rich relative, Mrs. Grey had come into some property."

Thereupon the bald old gentleman pricked up his ears, determined to watch, and do nothing rashly. But as, a week after, Mrs. Grey appeared, clad in handsome mourning, in a very elegant pony-chase, he ventured to call; and he then observed, that the drawing-room was newly furnished. Upon such evidences, he ventured to condole with the widow; and that, too, in a manner highly gratifying to her feelings.

"Doubtless, you have lost a *near* relative, dear Madam?" (glancing at the crape on her dress.)

"No, not very near; but I thought I could offer no less a mark of respect, to the memory of one, who has left me very substantial and generous proofs of his regard."

"Though I cannot but deplore the sad cause of your

wearing this sable costume, I must congratulate you on its becomingness, dear Madam," said the old gentleman. "I never saw you, looking more charming!"

"Oh! pray do not think me vain enough to believe all your flatteries!" faltered the widow, with her most bewitching smile.

"Nay; to flatter *you*, is not possible!"

Mrs. Grey had a dim notion, that the remark was not particularly novel; but, never mind!

"Now, really, at my time of life—" simpered the widow, with her head on one side, like an inquisitive parrot.

"*Your* time of life!—My dear madam, you are just of that age, which men of sense and discernment prefer! We cannot endure your young silly girls, who have no ideas beyond bread-and-butter and *beaux*. Now, give me an intellectual woman, of thirty-six!"

Mrs. Grey was considerably nearer fifty, than forty; but she was all the better pleased with the implied compliment; and, to be called "intellectual," was her weakness and ambition—possibly, because she had a rather smaller share of common-sense, than a child of six.

"Ah! Mr. Nubley, it is very well to talk; but I shall, ere long, see your actions contradict your words! You will, some day, get caught by a silly face of sixteen!"

The old gentleman became very energetic. He was in the very act of making a sportive claw at the widow's hand, when the door opened, and the page announced a visitor; so the enamoured swain departed, well satisfied with the success of his visit, and determined to lay close siege to the heart of his fair enslaver.

* * * * *

Mrs. Howard and Lucy were engaged in busy preparations for the marriage of the latter, constantly going to and from the pretty house, which was being got ready for the reception of the young pair. John was a confederate in all their plans; and little did they suspect, when they met his kindly glance, and heard his cheery, hopeful words, regarding their future lot, that his heart was wrung with anguish, as he contrasted their happiness, with that which should have been his. As Lucy flitted from room to room, altering the position

of this or that piece of furniture, or adding this or that ornament, with a happy smile on her face, he pictured to himself, one, who *might* have been so occupied—as *his* promised bride! And the drop of sorrow in his heart, swelled into a bitter well of angry feeling, towards her who had checked his life's stream of happiness; and there arose a gnawing, sickening thirst for revenge—a wish that her marriage might prove unhappy, and that she might recognise it as a judgment upon her treachery. Little did he dream, that such thoughts were even then fitting through the troubled heart of the young wife. Perchance, if he could have had but one glimpse of the sad face, which, so often, when she was alone, drooped so hopelessly on her clasped hands, he might have retracted that wish, and have hated himself for having formed it. But, whatever were his real feelings, those around him knew nothing of them. To his mother and Lucy, he appeared contented—nay, cheerful; and so far did he succeed in deceiving them, that they ventured to doubt whether he had been seriously attached to Helen, and even began to indulge conjectures as to whether Emma Harwood was not, after all, more suited to his taste.

Oh! blessed short-sightedness! how much anxiety as to the happiness and welfare of our beloved, does it not spare us?

Lucy's wedding-day was approaching rapidly; indeed, it was fixed for the following Wednesday. A day or two previous to it, John entered the room, laughing immoderately.

"Oh! *such* a joke! Such an absurd affair!" he exclaimed, as soon as he could speak for laughing. "Who *do* you think is going to be married, the same day as Lucy?"

"Mr. Masters?"

"No. Try again."

"Marty?"

"No.—Oh! you'll never guess!"—What say you, to Marty's Mistress?" and again, he laughed heartily.

He hated Mrs. Grey; for he knew, full well, that, but for her, Helen would never have given him up; and he rejoiced at anything she might do, that would render her a mark for ridicule. Lucy and young Harwood joined in the laughter; but Mrs. Howard looked stern.

"Imbecile — utterly wanting in common-sense and common self-respect—as I have always considered her, I could *not* have believed her capable of such folly! You must be mistaken, John!"

"No, indeed; the happy bridegroom elect, has himself conveyed to me the gratifying intelligence! It was as much as I could do, to help laughing in his face!"

"And who *is* the youth?" asked Lucy, still laughing.

"Old Nubley!"

There was another burst of derisive merriment, from the three. But Mrs. Howard's brow grew yet sterner; and she mentally resolved, to let Mrs. Grey have the benefit of her full and candid opinion on the subject. For she and Mrs. Grey kept up a show of cordiality, exchanging visits once a month;—it was John's wish that they should do so; for he thought that a cessation of intercourse between the two families, might provoke disagreeable comments, and throw light upon a subject, which had hitherto remained in obscurity, —namely, his engagement with Helen. Both the ladies, however, disliked each other most cordially. Mrs. Howard disliked Mrs. Grey, for her share in Helen's rejection of John; and Mrs. Grey hated Mrs. Howard, partly because her conscience told her that she had wronged her, partly because she knew that that lady fathomed, and despised her.



A SEA OF TROUBLES.

WHEN they arrived at Brighton, Helen thought they would get rid of the obnoxious Brooks. But no; he put up at the same hotel; and, to her horror, Arthur, in her hearing, pressed him to take up his abode with them as long as they remained in Brighton!

For the first time since her marriage, she lost her temper; and, no sooner had Mr. Brooks retired to arrange his luggage, than she exclaimed,—

“I do think, Arthur, you might have consulted me!”

“About what, love?”

“About asking that horrible man to stay with us.”

“But he is not staying with us! He has his own rooms in the hotel; and it would be churlish, not to ask him to look in here whenever he feels dull.”

“Nonsense, Arthur! If you were to carry out that principle to its full extent, you might have your rooms swarming with half Brighton! Of course, every one feels dull at times; but that is no reason why *we* are to be bored, in order to rescue them from that objectionable state!”

“My little pet is cross to-night!”

“Be quiet, Arthur! I won’t be kissed!—and I won’t be treated like a child!”

“I’m not treating you like a child;—though, upon my word, at the present moment, you look extremely like one!” he said, as if amused at her anger.

“Arthur, I don’t like Mr. Brooks!”

"Why not?"

"I don't know."

"A lucid reason!"

"Well then, I will give a better one.—He seems to forget that all invitations ought to emanate from the *mistress*—not from the *master*—of the house! I have done all that I could, to show him that *I* did not wish for his society; yet he forces himself upon us, accepts your slightest invitation, and treats *me*, as nobody!"

"And its little dignity is hurt—eh?"

"Don't be a fool, Arthur! I have no patience with you!" she exclaimed, fairly exasperated.

His manner changed. He drew her to his side; and looked earnestly, and very sadly, in her face.

"My Helen,—when you married me, you meant to trust me in everything?"

"Yes; but I don't trust Mr. Brooks! and when I married you, I didn't marry him, also! He is sowing discord between us, and making me wretched!"

He released her hands, and said, more sternly than she had ever heard him speak,—

"Peace! Brooks is our best friend! Offend him, and—"

He hurried from the room, leaving her a prey to terrible emotions.

What could be this dreadful secret? What influence had this man over her husband, that he should persist in courting his society, despite her remonstrances? Whatever it might be, she was determined to defeat his purpose; but she would act in a different way from what she had hitherto done. She would pretend to agree with her husband, as to his friend's good qualities; for she saw, that opposition rendered him all the more determined to defend him. She would encourage the man's presence, till even Arthur should feel it an insupportable annoyance, and long to get rid of him.

Alas! how industriously we sometimes weave the web for our own destruction?

A few days later, came a letter from Mrs. Grey. It was as follows:—

"MY DEAREST LOVE.—Deem me not unkind, for remaining silent so long. I write now, to apprise you of an event,

perfectly unforeseen by you, dearest; but which I have for some time anticipated.

"I have not told you, my sweet child, how very, very lonely I have felt, since you left me; for I knew how it would affect your sensitive heart. That loneliness—that intense craving for sympathy—for the presence of some one to cling to—have at last decided me, to accept the devotion of one—not altogether unknown to you,—who has, for years, aspired to my hand. Yet, that has not been my chief motive.—My sweetest, do not think your fond, foolish mamma, to blame, when she confesses, that she could not bear to be a burthen on her only child! I know you will say, dearest, that your generous gifts have afforded far more happiness to the donor, than to the recipient; but indeed, love, I could no longer bear to impose such a tax on your generosity; and Mr. Nubley's income is sufficiently good, to enable me at once to cast off this burden from my mind. It has, I confess, cost me a struggle, ere I could resolve to sacrifice the memory of the past, and take upon myself a new name, and with it, new duties and responsibilities; but my lonely position, together with my unwillingness to trespass on your generous affection, have, as I have said, induced me to take this important step.

"We shall still reside in the humble cottage; partly, because it is endeared to me by many sweet associations, and partly, because Edwin prefers it to any other house in Brockley.—He says, it is so ideal—'a very bower for the loves!'—A pretty idea, is it not?

"Our wedding-day is fixed. Now, do not, I beseech you, my darling, send any contribution to my trousseau! It is not necessary; and I should be quite grieved, to accept it!

"Edwin unites with me, in most affectionate love; and believe me, my darling child, your devoted, fearful, happy, trembling,

MOTHER."

During the perusal of this letter, a strange sensation had been gradually taking possession of Helen. First, there was utter dismay; then, indignation, as the memory of her dear, gentle father, came floating dimly back to her, through the saddened vista of years and changes. Then followed self-upbraiding, as she read her mother's assurance, that she had

been influenced, in a great measure, by her wish to supply the blank created by her child's absence. But, through all, was an odd feeling of doubt and dissatisfaction, partly towards herself, partly towards her mother. She began to have a vague idea, that she had been in a dream all her life—that there had been *two* Mrs. Greys, and she had mistaken one for the other. She felt, somehow, as if her mother had been wearing a mask; and one, so cleverly contrived, that even her own daughter had mistaken the false features for the true ones. But, not thus did she arrange her ideas—they were all vague—undefined; yet she felt angry with herself, she hardly knew why. And, mingled with it all, was an intensity of sorrow and disappointment;—as if she had lost something that could never be replaced.

“Oh! if *he* were here to advise me!” she sighed.

Was it to her *husband*, that she alluded? No, she had ceased to consult *him* in any of her troubles; for he would only try to laugh them off. He treated her as a child, instead of as a reasoning creature. Or, perhaps, he never thought continuously, on any subject. One moment, he would be in the wildest spirits; the next, he would be equally dejected. One moment, he would relate some merry story; the next, he would abruptly change the subject, to one of the deepest gloom. He was no companion to Helen; and her thoughts often fluttered back to the time, when she had had an unfailing friend and adviser in every emergency. Gradually the conviction was dawning on her mind, that Marty's words were to prove true;—that she had, indeed, cast aside the substance for the shadow! And now, these thoughts came crowding thickly around her; and, as she remembered her mother's share in her unhappiness, one more bitter drop was added to her cup of sorrow; for she had hitherto had much confidence in that mother's prudence and judgment; but this fatal letter had destroyed that trust. In another moment, however, she repelled these thoughts in affright, and forced her imagination to dwell upon her husband's handsome face and splendid figure, and upon his love for her, wayward and capricious as she began to think it; and, with a sigh, she repeated to herself, that her husband was one out of a thousand, and that she was thankless and selfish.

She now saw little of Arthur, who was constantly with his friend. Brooks accompanied them everywhere; and Helen, true to the plan she had laid down for herself, was very attentive to him, doing her best to conceal her dislike, and pressing for his company on all occasions.

While she was yet thinking over her mother's letter, Arthur came racing into the room, in unusual spirits, exclaiming, merrily,—

"I've given him the slip! Do come out with me, Helen."

"Given who the slip?" she asked, scarcely daring to believe that he spoke of Brooks.

"Why, that fellow Brooks! He is becoming a perfect nuisance!"

"I thought you liked him so much."

"One may like a fellow well enough, and yet, not want to have him perpetually boring one. He gives me no peace; and you encourage him, by constantly inviting him to accompany us," he answered, rather sulkily.

So, then, her plan was succeeding! She resolved to persevere.

"But, indeed, Arthur, I fear he will be offended. You cannot, surely, have behaved so rudely, as to leave without his knowledge?"

"But I have; and I daresay he is seeking me distractedly everywhere!" he replied, with a burst of laughter.

"Then, we must go and find him, and apologize," she said, very gravely. "Practical jokes are very well in their way; but they should never degenerate into rudeness!"

She was just leaving the room, to dress for her walk, when Brooks entered.

The expression of keen anxiety on his face, gave way to a stern frown, as his glance fell upon Arthur.

"Why have you played me this trick?" he asked, shortly and abruptly, looking him fully and intently in the face.

Helen expected that it would be only a word and a blow, from her husband; and she sprang forward, to avert the threatened outbreak; but she stopped half way, perfectly astounded by the expression on Arthur's countenance.

Yes, there was no mistaking it;—it was one of positive, abject, *fear*!

She would rather he had dashed her aside, and felled his questioner to the ground, than have seen *that* look on his face! Arthur, a *coward*! Arthur, the embodiment of manly strength and vigor! Oh! that terrible, terrible moment, when a wife first learns to *despise* her husband!

The iron entered into her soul; for she felt that she could never again love him as she had loved. She sank upon a chair, and covered her face with her hands; for she could not bear to see that look of degradation.

In another moment, Brooks spoke in a different tone of voice,—

"Well, I see it was only a joke, Huntingdon; so let's shake hands. I'm a hasty fellow, you know; and when my blood's up, I'm dangerous! So, don't try any more of these practical jokes on me, there's a good fellow!"

She withdrew her hands from her face, and beheld her husband accept the proffered token of amity; while his mouth moved nervously, and his eyes sought the ground, as if they dared not meet the searching gaze of his companion.

How low he was falling in her esteem!

Brooks now turned towards Helen, and apologized for the scene; but she scarcely heeded him, for she was horror-stricken by observing the look of ferocious, deadly hatred, with which her husband was regarding him, now that his back was turned to him.

In a minute or two, she addressed Brooks,—

"We were just going out, to seek you. I think," she added, turning to her husband, "I will put on my bonnet, and we will go for a stroll."

"I shall be delighted to accompany you," said Brooks; though she had not invited him.

She bit her lip, and, without replying, hurried from the room.

She pondered.—How should she get rid of this man, whose cool assurance, and quiet determination not to take offence—not to understand her—drove her almost to despair?

She now resolved to change her tactics; since her husband was now evidently no better disposed towards him, than she was. She would no longer disguise from Brooks, that his society was disagreeable to her. If that did not succeed, she

would leave Brighton, for some other place.—And what excuse could he possibly have, for following them ?

On her return to the drawing-room, she found her husband at the window, laughing and joking with Brooks, as though nothing had happened amiss between them.

"This shall not go on much longer!" she thought. "Though Arthur can never again be to me what he once was, I will not stand quietly by, and daily witness his degradation!—see him each day sink lower and lower!"

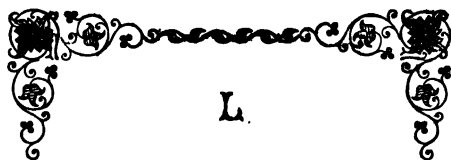
Without advancing beyond the door, she said, "Come, Arthur, I am ready. Mr. Brooks will excuse us, I am sure; we shall not be away very long?"

"I will go with you, if you will have me," said Brooks, looking at Arthur,—not, at her.

"Yes, come along," he replied.

Helen's indignation was too great, to allow her to reflect on this man's fearful tenacity of purpose;—his determination served but to strengthen hers. She spoke scarcely a word during their walk. Her husband, and Brooks, laughed and joked as usual, and amused themselves by throwing stones into the water.

At last they returned home. Worn out by the trouble and excitement of the day, Helen retired early to rest. But she could not sleep; for bitter thoughts were conflicting in her heart.—Her mother's letter—Arthur's fearful exhibition of cowardice—Brooks's quiet insolence;—each contended for the mastery. But at last she formed her resolution, and then fell asleep.



FOILED!

"ARTHUR," said Helen, the next morning, "I want to have a talk with you, before we go down-stairs; for there is no saying a word, for that man's presence!"

"Hush! hush!" whispered Arthur. "You don't know how cunning he is! He may be even now listening at that door?"

"What if he is? I do not fear him!" she exclaimed, in accents of reproachful contempt.

"Helen, speak lower, I beseech you!"

"Tell me—" she impetuously began, "—I *will* know! Arthur—tell me, why you fear him! Surely—surely you have committed no crime, of which that man has cognizance, and for which, he threatens to have you punished?"

She gazed searchingly in his face. He made no answer, but seemed trying to collect his thoughts. His perplexity touched her. She continued, more gently,—

"Dear Arthur, there is some fearful mystery, connected with this man! He has come, like a dark cloud, over our path, which was before so sunny—so pleasant. Let us escape him! Since he will not leave us, let us leave him!"

"Yes! yes!—But oh! speak lower; or he will hear us!"

This time, she dropped her voice to a whisper, as she continued,—

"We must leave Brighton, Arthur, without giving him the slightest hint."

"Yes! yes!" he again responded; his face, perfectly radiant with joy.

Again she felt touched by his weakness. He seemed but a child in her hands—ready to agree to anything she might propose, for the avoidance of his enemy's presence.

Three evenings later, they wished Brooks good-night as usual, and went to their room. Helen listened anxiously. At last, Brooks's well-known, heavy step, came tramping up the stairs. She heard his door close, and knew that all was right.

"Now, Arthur—are you ready?"

But he clung to her in terror, and positively trembled!

"If he should overtake us!" he gasped.

"Well—what if he should? We could pretend we were playing him a trick."

"He would not believe it. He would—"

"Why, what *could* he do? Come, come;—our luggage has gone on to the train; and we can take a cab from the nearest stand, so as to get off with as little stir as possible. And, as we have sent the servants home, with instructions to prepare the house for our reception, they, no doubt, have told the people of the inn, that we were going home soon; so, if Mr. Brooks ask them, he will be foiled."

Still Arthur hung back. "You have to pay the bill," he said.

"I settled it, while you were sitting over your wine. Come now—come, Arthur!"

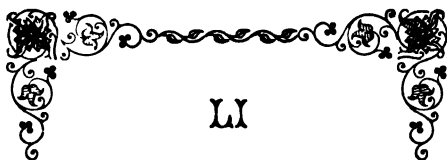
He rose, and crept along beside her, casting many a furtive glance behind.

They were in the street. She called a coach. They reached the terminus. The train was in motion. And then, Arthur fell upon her shoulder, and drew a long sigh of relief.

* * * * *

What a weight seemed to have been lifted from her heart, as she closed her eyes in the strange room of the little inn. Ere she fell asleep, she muttered to herself,—

"Foiled! Foiled!"



FOILED, INDEED !

ARTHUR was in wonderful spirits the next morning ; and looked so like his former self, as he leant out of the window of the little bed-room, the fresh breeze playing with his hair, that again and again did Helen congratulate herself on the success of her scheme.

"Oh ! you wild fellow !" she said, almost reprovingly, as Arthur indulged in one of his playful sallies to a passer-by, and concluded his oration by throwing the water-croft after the receding form ; " you wild fellow ! If you behave in this way, I shall have to write to Mr. Brooks, to come and keep you in order ! "

She spoke playfully ; but he shuddered, and said,—

"Don't speak of him ! Don't breathe his name ! Let us forget his very existence ! "

"There is one thing that I cannot forget ; and that is, that I am very hungry. Let us go down to breakfast."

Arthur glanced approvingly at the snowy cloth on the breakfast-table, at the pretty service, neatly set out, and, more than all, at the *two* chairs—not *three*—placed for them.

"Dear me !" said Helen, "there is no ham ! The idea of coming to a country inn, and forgetting to order ham ! Ring the bell, please, Arthur dear."

He obeyed. The door opened ; and, without looking up, she was proceeding to give the order, when Arthur, with a scream that was almost unearthly, sprang to her side. She looked up hastily.

There was—Brooks!

Had she seen a spectre, she could hardly have been more appalled. She could not remove her eyes from his face. He, on the contrary, was perfectly self-possessed. Advancing with his most courteous smile, he extended his hand to Helen. Scarcely knowing what she did, she accepted it. He then offered a similar courtesy to her husband; but Arthur retreated, as if involuntarily; and Brooks did not press the civility.

"Well, it really was capitally done; and you might have deceived anyone but *me*," he said, after taking his customary seat at table. "Upon my word, now," he continued, helping himself to an egg and some slices of tongue, "*it was* a capital joke! Now Huntingdon, how much have you won? What was the bet?"

Arthur could not speak; but Helen, perceiving, at once, that Brooks was acting up to his old determination of not taking offence, fell in with his humour, and replied,—

"You certainly are the best-tempered person breathing! Most people would have been excessively annoyed at our joke—which, was, I confess, carried a little too far."

She pronounced the last few words, in an apologetic manner, and with a pleading glance at Brooks; for she, too, was becoming a little afraid of this singular man, whose argus-eyed vigilance could so easily frustrate her most deep-laid plans.

"Offended!" he laughingly exclaimed; "nay, I am used to these jokes! Not that I am ever taken in by them;—no one can elude *me*, when I have once made up my mind that they shall not do so!—But this I must say;—every one of such jokes, makes me only the more open-eyed; and every successful attempt, renders the next one only more difficult!"

He glanced at Arthur, who sat cowering in his chair; and then added,—

"Delicious tongue, this! and these eggs are the freshest I have ever tasted."

"But," asked Helen, "how *did* you manage to find us out?"

"My dear lady," he replied, in a bantering tone, "I should be sure to find you out, even though you took up your abode:

in the interior of one of the Pyramids of Egypt, or within the crater of Mount Vesuvius!"

Arthur shuddered. Brooks continued,—

"Yes, people have often tried to play me these funny tricks. I like it, I confess;—it exercises my ingenuity. I am never so much amused, as while these practical jokes are being played off on me. But," he added, slowly and impressively, and looking Arthur steadily in the face, "you can't deceive *me*! I can read a man's thoughts in his eyes; and I know when he is plotting mischief. Then, I am on the scent; and, *once* on the scent, I am a very bloodhound!"

How the young pair shuddered, and trembled, before this man; as though they, not he, were guilty!

"Oh! you can't take *me* in!" he continued, in triumphant accents, still gazing on Arthur. "I can read your thoughts, even when you fancy them most secret! Days ago, I read all that you were about to do; and last night, when you thought I was asleep, I had my eye on you!"

It was true. He had followed them to the station; ascertained for what place they had taken tickets; and followed by the next train.

After awhile, Helen spoke, with what apparent gaiety she could assume,—

"Well, I confess that our little joke has failed; so we had better return to Brighton."

"Just so," replied Brooks, with his quiet smile.

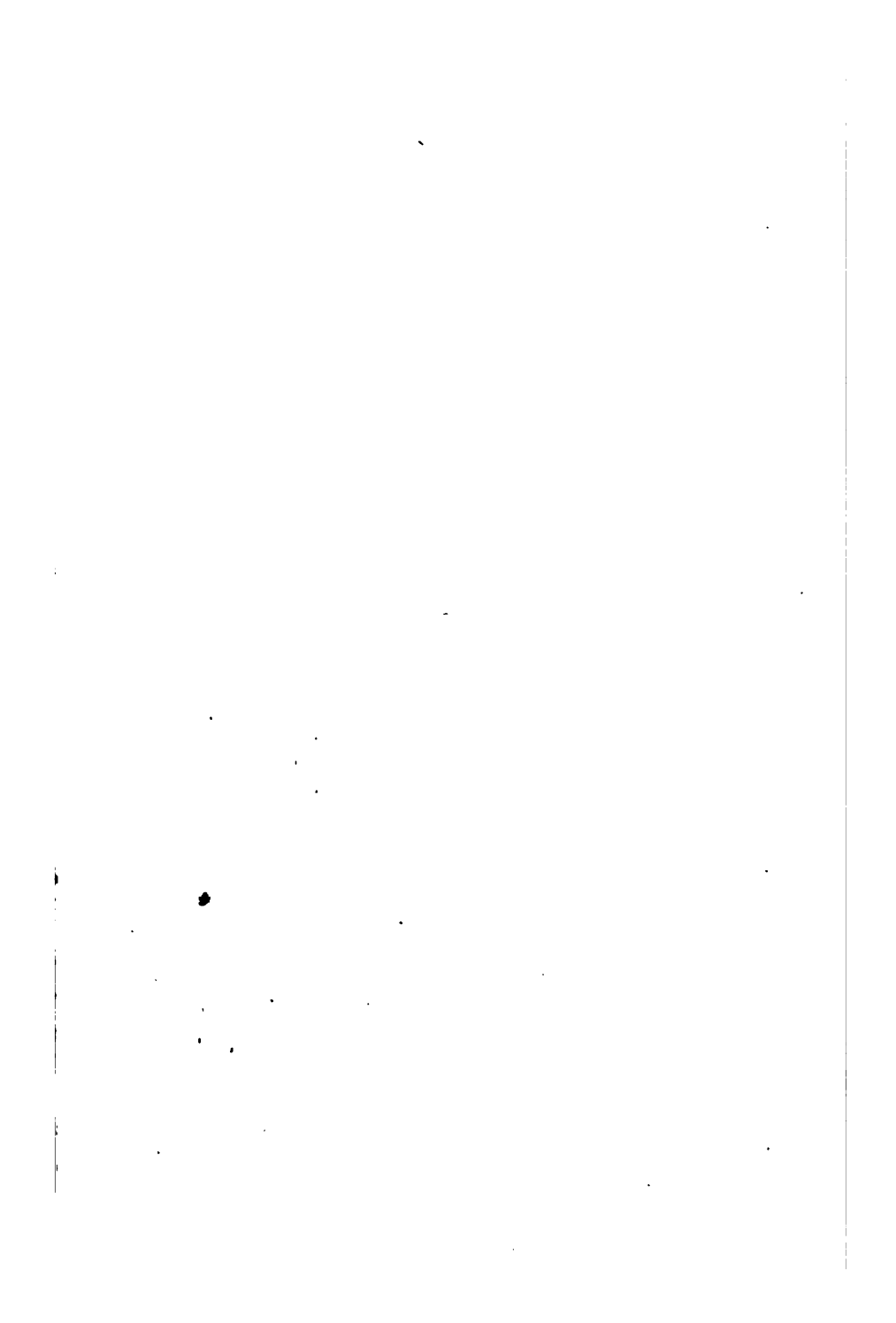
Sadly did they resume their places in the railway carriage; Arthur taking the seat farthest from Brooks. They returned to their hotel at Brighton, in time for dinner; after which meal, Arthur, who was thoroughly exhausted, lay down on the sofa, and soon slept.

Helen strolled to the window. Dusk had set in; and darkness was approaching. She leant her head against the sill. The sea-breeze came fanning upon her brow; and the splashing noise of the waves upon the shingly beach came floating through the quiet air. She felt very wretched; and her tears kept chasing each other silently down her cheeks.

"It is hard to bear—very hard! is it not, poor child?" asked a soft voice at her elbow.

Could that be Brooks? Could that man have one touch of human feeling in his iron nature?





"So young! so beautiful! so helpless!" he sighed.

A half-suspicion arose in her mind. She indignantly began, "How dare you ——" and then, meeting the saddened eye that was bent pityingly on her, she checked herself, and added, "Pardon me, I do not understand you! If I wrong you, forgive me, for I am very wretched—very, very wretched!"

"Scarcely more so, than I am, in seeing your misery, and being unable to alleviate it."

"But you can!—you can!" she eagerly exclaimed. "Only leave us—leave us to our happiness!"

"Happiness!" he said.

She looked down, conscious, that, even had he never appeared, her marriage would not have been a happy one. But she repeated,—

"Oh! leave us!—*Do* leave us!"

He gently, but firmly, shook his head.—"My poor child, you know not what you ask!"

She felt indignant; and exclaimed,—

"Then, we will leave *you*!"

"I will follow. You cannot avoid me!"

"We *will* avoid you! We will find *some* spot on the earth, undarkened by your shadow—unpolluted by your presence!"

"If you do, you will bitterly repent it!"

"Never!"

"You will.—Succeed in eluding me; and a horrible doom will be yours!"

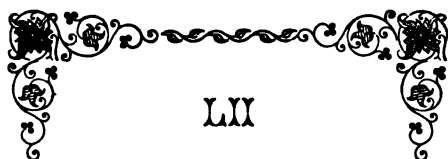
"You dare to threaten *me*?"

"I dare to *warn* you!"

"I defy you!"

"Poor, poor child!"

"Hypocrite!"



BROCKLEY.

HELEN sat down to write.

Her first letter was to Mrs. Grey. It was written with effort; and she feared that her mother might think it wanting in affection, and in warmth of congratulation on the coming important event. She added the following postscript:—

"I really must venture to run counter to your wishes in one respect. Of course, your trousseau is already complete; but do, pray, dearest mamma, try to remember some little things that you have forgotten, and apply the enclosed cheque towards supplying them. If I were with you, I should be able to find out a million things that you want; but, as poor Arthur's ill-health keeps me here, I must lose the pleasure of choosing your wedding present, and beg you to act as my deputy."

The second letter was to Mrs. Huntingdon, and was as follows:—

"I write to you, in great distress of mind. I hardly know how to begin; for I fear hurting your feelings, since he, (Mr. Brooks, I mean) is so valued a friend of yours. But, indeed, I have used every effort to get rid of him;—we have even tried to give him the slip, but without success. Poor Arthur is dreadfully nervous and cast down—not at all his former self; and I am most unhappy. Do advise me, or come here, if possible. I am sure *you* could do something. I am afraid I have not made myself intelligible. The truth is, I am terribly nervous and depressed, at sight of poor

Arthur's uneasiness. Mr. Brooks is, evidently, in possession of some secret, which gives him a hold over Arthur, who, though hating him, dares not resist him. What there is between the two, I know not; but this I do know,—that the man's presence is destroying our happiness. Pray come; or else, write, and advise me; or, write to Mr. Brooks. Only do something, for I cannot endure this suspense much longer."

A heavy gloom fell upon Mrs. Huntingdon's brow as she read this letter; and she hastily summoned her maid.

"Tell William to bring the carriage round in an hour; and pack my valise. I am going to Brighton for a week. You will accompany me."

She sat down again, to re-read Helen's letter.

"Poor girl!" she thought; "she is very young, and bears her trial well. Heaven knows, how all this will end!"

Helen's other letter met a very different reception.

"Dear, lovely child!" exclaimed Mrs. Grey, as the cheque for one hundred pounds met her enraptured vision. "What a thing it is, to have a dutiful child!"

She had not then time to read Helen's note; so she put it aside, and forgot to read it till the eve of her wedding, when she hastily ran through it, and again thanked Heaven that she had so good a child.

"Well, mum, I suppose you wont want me no more now?" asked Marty, a day or two before the wedding. Marty had viewed with no favor her mistress's intended fresh step in life; and, for the last few days, she had preserved a sullen demeanour, very foreign to her nature.

"And why should I not want you, my good girl?" enquired her mistress, in a blandishing tone. Well did she know Marty's value!

"I don't know, mum. I thought you'd maybe be havin' a forrin' maid, now you're beginnin' life over again."

This was the most sarcastic speech Marty had ever uttered. Mrs. Grey coloured.

"My good girl—"

"I *ain't* a girl!" Marty viciously interrupted.

"Well, my dear creature, you are most unreasonable to-day! Now, have I not explained to you, that my life, since my sweet child's departure, has been a blank?—that—"

"Then, if you know'd it would be, why did you go for to marry her so far away, mum?"

"'Why,' Marty? Because it was for her good! I could not be so selfish, as to stand in the way of her prospects. No, thank Heaven! not even my worst enemies can accuse *me* of selfishness!"

And Mrs. Grey gave a little sniff, and elevated her eyes to the ceiling; which had lately been painted over, at her daughter's expense, with little boys, and nondescript flowers, like pickling cabbages; and clouds; and wood-pigeons, intended to represent turtle doves.

"Then, why didn't you let her marry Mr. John, mum?"

This was a poser. Mrs. Grey hesitated, whether to reprimand Marty for impertinence, or, to applaud her question. She decided in favour of the latter course.

"As your question is put in a spirit of candid inquiry, which to a candid mind, must always be pleasing, I shall have much pleasure in answering it. 'Why did I not allow her to marry Mr. Howard?' She had my full permission to do so; but she preferred Mr. Huntingdon; and, as he was nearer her own age, and more suited to her in thought and feeling, and (though that was with me a *very* minor consideration) far better off, I could not refuse my consent, although it pronounced the sentence of banishment from my child!"

Mrs. Grey, at this moment, really thought herself a martyr!

"Then, why," persisted the obstinate Marty, "why didn't you let'em be, mum?"

"'Let'em'—what?—You vul—you foolish creature! Let who, or what, be what?"

"Why couldn't you let'em be as they was, mum? Mr. John was a' courtin' Miss Helen so nice, till that there Mrs. Huntingdon come, and took her away! Why didn't you let her stop here, and marry Mr. John?"

"She wished to visit Mrs. Huntingdon, Marty."

"Yes, but she wouldn't mum, if you hadn't gave her a hankerin' after it!"

"Well, Marty, you must admit that it has all turned out very fortunately?"

"No, mum, it hasn't!—Miss Helen isn't so happy as she had ought to be. When we was at that there Staniswood, I often come upon her when she was a' cryin' fit to break her heart; and, though the dear would begin to smile when she saw me, and make believe to be happy, she wasn't—she wasn't! And Mr. John hasn't forgotten her sweet face; and he's miserable! He can't hide it from *me*; for I've loved'em both, since ever they was children; and it's the greatest trouble that's ever fell upon me, that them two has lost their way in the world—poor dears!"

And Marty, bursting out crying, threw her apron over her face, and ran into the kitchen, to pour her sorrows into the ear of the gentle and sympathetic Tom.

Two days later, the weddings came off; and the two couples, whose hopes, fears, and motives, were so widely different, took the irrevocable vow.

* * * * *

It was evening. Mrs. Howard, and John, sat together. Each feigned to be absorbed in a book; but the mother's eyes were dim, and the words of the tale floated in waves before her, and she forgot to turn the pages. While she could not but feel the parting, which that day had called forth, much hope and thankfulness were mingled with her regrets for her youngest darling; but her heart was wrung for her eldest born, whose treasured hopes of years had been so rudely crushed. She knew, how he had suffered, that day; and the gentle fortitude with which he bore his trial, went to her heart.

"John, my dear, you cannot see to read; it is getting so dark. Will you ring for lights?"

John did not answer.

He was, in thought, far away, travelling, with his young bride, through scenes of enchanting beauty, such as he had often pictured to her, and, as they had fondly intended to visit together. They stood upon a wooded height. Below them, was a pleasant valley. A river glided peacefully through the tranquil scene, winding in and out, through light and shadow, quietly pursuing its steady course, like the gentle current of a good man's life. Blue vapour curled upwards from the roof of the cottars' homes, and mingled

with the evening mist; for the sun was setting, and twilight was already beginning in the valley. The faint, pleasant tinkling of the sheep-bells was the only sound that rippled through the air, save an occasional rustling of the leaves over-head.

He was happy. His young wife's hand was clasped in his; and her soft eyes were upturned with an expression of radiant, holy love.

"John, dear," repeated his mother.

His vision was destroyed! He groaned heavily.

"Oh! I had forgotten!—forgotten!"

"Poor boy! would that you *could* forget one so unworthy!"

"Hush! hush!" he exclaimed, almost fiercely. "Don't speak of it! I know what you would say; but—but you are mistaken—I do not love her! Were she, to-morrow, free to offer me her heart, I would reject it—trample on the gift—scorn her! I would give the best years of my life, for such a chance!—for the power of treating her with all the contempt and loathing that I feel!"

"This is not a good spirit, John! No blessing will follow it!"

"I am not the favourite of heaven!" he bitterly exclaimed.

"Do you *deserve* to be? Are you not acting, in direct opposition to its commands? Are you not forbidden to encourage this vindictive spirit? Are you not commanded to forgive, even as you would be forgiven?"

"Yet you, yourself, mother, constantly speak against her!"

"I speak *justly* of her, because I wish you to see her character in its true light; in order that you may become reconciled to her loss, by the knowledge, that, even had she married you, she would not have made you happy."

"I *am* reconciled to her loss. Have I not told you, that I do not love her? I only wish to see her pride humbled. I wish her to receive *some* punishment.—Such treachery as hers, ought not to pass, unrequited!"

"John, Marty tells me, that Helen is not happy!"

For an instant, the intense surprise with which he received

this announcement, was followed by a gleam of joy. Then, his face grew sad.

"Not happy?" he asked, very quietly. "What cause does Marty assign?"

"She does not know the cause; but, she is sure that Helen is not happy. Marty has often surprised her in tears, and says that she is looking anxious, and thoughtful, and old; and that, though she sometimes smiles, her smile is even sadder than tears. Marty thinks that her husband is not suited to her—she does not know why. The poor soul is in great trouble about it."

John did not then reply; but, when he wished his mother good night, he added,—

"I think you ought to write to her. Her own mother is small comfort to her, Heaven knows! and I should think *his* mother is not much better. Do write to her, poor child!"

So much, for John's plans of revenge!



CLOUD AND SUNSHINE.

HELEN was sitting alone at the window, trying to amuse herself by watching the gay crowd outside, when Mrs. Huntingdon arrived. With a cry of joy, Helen sprang to meet her; for, though there was not much sympathy between them, Mrs. Huntingdon was associated, in her ideas, with comfort, since she hoped much from her influence with Arthur.

"My dear Helen, I was so much perplexed by your letter, that I thought it best to come here at once, in order to hear, from your own lips, what has happened."

Then Helen told her of Brooks's mysterious influence over Arthur; of their attempts to get rid of him; and, of his evident determination to remain with them, in spite of their manifest dislike.

"But, *does* Arthur dislike him?" asked Mrs. Huntingdon.

"That is the very thing that puzzles me," replied Helen. "One moment he will seem positively to *hate* him—as, for instance, that day when I caught his glance at Mr. Brooks, when his back was turned; the next, he will laugh and joke with him, as if he were his best friend. He evidently finds *some* attraction in his society; for *I* am left alone, day after day, while he is walking about with this man; who seems to delight in taking him for such immense walks, that, when he returns from them, he is so tired, he can do nothing but sleep.—A pleasant, companionable husband, truly!"

Helen tried to speak sarcastically, in order to hide her

grief; but Mrs. Huntingdon saw the tears that would force their way, do what she might to restrain them.

"But, my dear, your inexperience exaggerates the evil. Arthur is young, and has only just given up his bachelor life. You must give him a little more time, to settle down into the quiet married man."

"If my society has no power to charm, in the first year of our marriage, is it likely to do so, later? No, no; I fear that he is very fickle!"

"But, indeed, dear, Mr. Brooks is a very steady, good companion for him."

"Yes; and since he has been with us, Arthur has not indulged too freely in wine—I am spared the misery which those terrible fits of excitement used to cause me; but, 'the remedy is worse than the disease;'—I would rather have Arthur, even as he was, than see him become, each day, more alienated from me."

"I will speak to Arthur."

"Yes, do!—do! And, if you *would* take that disagreeable Mr. Brooks away!—"

That evening, Helen felt happier; for she leant upon her husband's arm, while his mother, and Mr. Brooks, walked behind them. In returning, however, Mrs. Huntingdon took her son's arm; and gradually fell behind Helen and Brooks.

She remained silent; but he addressed her.—

"So, you really are determined to declare 'war to the knife,' between us?"

He spoke jestingly, treating her almost as a child. She was nettled, and replied, very haughtily,—

"I am very much in earnest, in wishing to enjoy my husband's society, unmolested."

"Do you really wish me to leave you," he asked.

"I do."

He sighed, and involuntarily added, "Then, there is no help for it!"

Her heart bounded with joy. Such wonderful success, she had not dared to expect. After a few moments, he resumed,—

"How am I to excuse myself to Arthur?"

"You need make no excuse; *he* will not oppose your departure!"

They walked on in silence. Soon after, they entered their hotel.

"Now, let us have tea," said Mrs. Huntingdon, in a cheerful voice.

Helen rang the bell. Arthur went to the window, and leant out. She joined him.

The moon had risen; and her silver rays beamed full upon his face. Helen looked once, upon that face, and then passed her arms gently round him, and leant upon his shoulder. There was so much hopeless misery in his look, that it went to her heart.

"You are not well, to-night, love?"

He did not answer; for his lip trembled. He turned aside.

"Oh, Arthur; don't turn away from me! Tell me—what makes you so sad?"

With a half-stifled sob, he abruptly left her, and joined his mother at the tea-table.

Brooks, and Mrs. Huntingdon, laughed and talked for the four; but it was evident that their gaiety was forced, and that something was on the mind of each. Helen made no attempt at cheerfulness, neither did Arthur; the latter was in one of his quiet, thoughtful moods. As the conversation took a more intellectual turn, he joined in it. He was in just such a mood, as Helen best loved him in, save for its extreme sadness;—grave, calm, collected.

"I am making a good tea," said Brooks, at length. "Our early dinner, and the fresh air, have made me feel famished. I *ought* to make a good tea to-night;—it is the last I may ever enjoy with you."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Arthur. "You are not going to leave us?"

But his surprise was not sufficiently well counterfeited, to succeed in deceiving Helen. She felt certain, that he had previously been made aware of Brooks's approaching departure.

"Yes," pursued the other; "I go to-morrow. Circumstances have occurred, which compel me to leave, sooner than I had intended."

"And whither do you go?" Arthur inquired.

"I purpose travelling through France; and, perhaps, I may take a peep at the Rhine."

"I envy you!" said Arthur.

"I suppose you will go to the lakes?" asked Brooks.

"No. Helen is tired of moving, and would rather go to Staniswood.—But, as for me, why, I really don't see, why I shouldn't spend two or three weeks, in accompanying you on your delightful trip."

The sudden revulsions of feeling, to which Helen had that day been subjected, had told upon her—weakened, as she was, by months of anxiety—more that she was aware; and now, the sharp transition, from unexpected joy, to dire disappointment, was too much for her. She burst into a fit of hysterical weeping, which they vainly tried to calm. At last, Arthur carried her up-stairs, and laid her on the bed. A heavy cloud was on his face; but he did not speak. He sat beside her, pressing her hands within his, with a vehemence that spoke of a fierce conflict raging in his breast. When she became more calm, he released her hand, and, walking to the window, sat down.

For a long time, she lay still, watching him in silence. At length she spoke. How the feeble, plaintive voice, smote upon his heart!—

"Arthur!"

He did not answer;—his face was averted, and she thought he had not heard her.

"Arthur, do look at me! do speak to me!"

He turned towards her, a face of such woe, as she had never seen, nor imagined! Almost with a scream, she sprang up in bed, exclaiming,—

"Oh! for pity's sake, answer me! What makes you so wretched? Come here, Arthur; come to me!"

She held out her arms. With a wild cry, as if by an uncontrollable impulse, he rushed forward, and fell on his knees before her.

"Will you tell me, Arthur, what is this secret, that divides us? Anything, would be better, than this suspense! Oh!—let me—let me—know the worst!"

He clasped his hands upon his brow; she gently drew them away, and looked into his eyes.

"You *are* ill; and you will not tell me! You are feverish; and your eyes are wild! Oh! don't go away now!—You may be ill, and I not by, to nurse you!"

He replied, shortly and abruptly, "Don't urge me.—It *must* be—I must go!"

"You do not love me! *That* is your secret—I know it now!" she said, turning proudly from him. "You are miserable, because you think you have made me wretched for life!—And, if you had, I should have deserved it; for I rejected, for your sake, a good, upright man, who would have loved me better than you have done—who would have made me happier than you have made me!"

"God forgive me!" he groaned. "God forgive me! I was a villain—a selfish, heartless villain!"

His ghastly face—his despairing words—again softened her. She drew down his face to hers; and kissed his heated brow.

"Arthur, I spoke unkindly—I did not mean what I said. You have not made me unhappy—forget it, love! But, tell me,—you will not leave me?—you will not? I feel so weak and ill—as if I should not live much longer. Oh! don't leave me!—not now—not *now*, dear husband!"

"I will not!"

She clasped him to her heart, in a wild tumult of joy.

"Dear Arthur! Dear husband! Now, I know that you love me! And we shall be so happy! And we will forget these little troubles.—And when that man is gone——"

She ceased; for her last words, had struck, with electric force, upon his ear. He shuddered.

"I forgot! I forgot!" he muttered.

"Well, dear Arthur, we will talk no more about him. But, go down now, and tell them I am better; and make my excuses for not joining them—will you? I daresay I shall be asleep, when you come back; so, kiss me, dear! Good-night."

Two hours later, his pale face was bending over her. His mother was with him. She spoke,—

"There, Arthur—you see she is asleep. Now, leave her; for she might wake."

"How sad her face has grown!" he said.

"Yes, yes," his mother impatiently replied; "*take care*, lest you add yet more sadness to it!—Go!"

He turned, to depart ; then, he once more looked upon the sleeping face.

"She smiles! How beautiful she is!"

"Beware, lest your culpable weakness, drive the smile for ever from her face!" was the stern rejoinder.

"God bless her—keep her—guard her!"

He resolutely averted his face, and suffered his mother to draw him away.



HOPE.

WHEN Helen awoke, the next morning, she started up, wildly, screaming, "Arthur!—where is he?"

"Good news for you, my dear!" said Mrs. Huntingdon, entering the room. "Mr. Brooks has left."

"But Arthur?—where is he?"

"He has just accompanied him a little way on his journey."

"When will he be back?"

"He did not say, dear."

"Did he leave no message for me?"

"Only, that you were not to fancy he had eloped with some other lady, or committed bigamy, or done anything else, of an equally culpable nature."

"Ah!" said Helen, with a sigh of relief, "then it is all right. He would not have left with such jesting words, if he had not intended to return to-day."

(Mrs. Huntingdon did not think it necessary to inform her, that the message was one of her own fabricating!)

After breakfast, they began to talk about their plans.

"Don't you think, dear, that, as Brighton is getting very cold, we may as well return to Staniswood?"

"Certainly. To tell the truth, my stay at Brighton has been so miserable, that I have taken quite a dislike to the place. I shall never like it again."

"Then, shall we start to-morrow morning?"

"I shall be glad to do so."

Helen was happier than she had been for some time. The

absence of Brooks, was an inexpressible relief to her mind; and she laughed and chatted gaily. But, in proportion to her merriment, was Mrs. Huntingdon's increasing gloom, which at last became so apparent, that Helen noticed it.

"I do believe you are sorry to leave Brighton; or else, you miss your dear, dear, estimable, steady, 'prudent' Mr. Brooks!" she merrily began.

"No, love!—I shall be glad to get back to Staniswood; and I do not miss Mr. Brooks."

"Then, why are you so dull?"

Mrs. Huntingdon looked at her watch. "To be candid, I think it is time Arthur were here."

Helen started, in quick alarm.—"You don't think that any accident has happened?"

"No, my dear. But I think it not unlikely, that Mr. Brooks may have persuaded him to go on a little farther; and that he may not be able to return to us to-night."

At this moment, a note was brought in, and handed to Helen. It was from Arthur.

"Who brought this?" she asked; for it bore no postmark.

"A railway porter, ma'am," was the reply.

With a sinking heart, she opened it, and read.

"MY DARLING WIFE,—You were sleeping so peacefully, and looked so much better, that, as my mother is with you, I consented to accompany Brooks, for the first forty miles of his journey; but he is so cast down at his departure, that I have let him persuade me, to go on a little farther with him; so that I shall not be able to join you this evening. My mother talked of returning to Staniswood to-morrow; I will, therefore, go straight thither, instead of stopping at Brighton.

"Your devoted,

"ARTHUR."

So great had been Helen's dread of some accident to her husband, that his note was an absolute relief to her; and, to Mrs. Huntingdon's surprise, she said, very cheerfully,—

"Let us start early to-morrow. I should not like him to arrive first, at Staniswood."

And the rest of the evening she passed in merry talk, and happy anticipations. She looked so pretty and child-like—so young and helpless—that even that hard worldly woman, felt

touched; and, passing her hand caressingly over the silken braids of her hair, she kissed the young brow, with more affection than she had ever before shown to her daughter-in-law. This, too, was a comfort to Helen; and, as she lay down to rest that night, she thought,—

“Yes, my life is taking a happier turn! We have at last shaken off that man, whose presence made my husband appear so contemptible—so unlike himself. And I think his mother loves me; and, therefore, I shall not feel such a longing for Brockley, as I have lately felt. Perhaps, Staniswood may, in time, grow quite as dear to me.”

If, instead of idly speculating on the turn of events, she had prayed to their All-Wise Disposer, so to fortify her heart, that, whatever aspect they might assume, they should work together for her good; would she not have done more wisely? Had she confessed, to Him, the folly and wickedness of her past life, and, bewailing her misspent time—her neglected duties—implored His aid to live better in future; the storm might, indeed, have beaten furiously upon her; but she would have been better prepared to receive it, sheltered in that fortress, which His love builds, for all His soldiers and servants, and which may be assailed, but can never fall:—

“The Peace of God, which passeth all understanding.”



DISAPPOINTMENT.

WORN out with travel, and with the sorrow and anxiety of the last few days, Helen approached Staniswood. As the carriage drew up to the door, she felt half pleased—half sorry—that no Arthur was waiting there, to receive her.

"Any letter?" she asked. No, there was no letter.

"That is a sign that he is coming," she observed to Mrs. Huntingdon; who, however, did not answer.

Helen's toilet was performed by fits and starts, to the extreme disgust of her maid, who wondered "why Mrs. Arthur couldn't keep quiet for one minute together, but would keep running to the window!" At last, she was dressed, and went down stairs.

She could not settle to anything; for, besides experiencing that vague feeling of discomfort, and wishing for bed-time, that generally attends a return home, after a long journey, she was in a fever of impatience for Arthur's arrival. Every ten minutes, her watch was consulted; then she would walk into the hall, and strain her sight and her hearing, to gain the first intimation of his approach;—but in vain. And thus, a couple of hours passed away. At length, Mrs. Huntingdon came down stairs; and, soon after, dinner was announced.

"Do let us wait, for Arthur!" she pleaded. She felt, as if waiting for him would bring him sooner.

"As you like, dear," replied Mrs. Huntingdon; "though it would be just like him, not to arrive, till the last train."

"So it would.—And you are tired and quite worn-out! How selfish of me, to forget it! Yes, we will not wait!"

With a sigh, she went down to the dining-room.

The evening wore heavily away. Arthur did not come; and Helen's restless anxiety was painful to witness. At last Mrs. Huntingdon spoke to her,—

"Would it not be just like him, to miss the train?"

"Oh! I hope he will not!" faltered Helen. "I cannot help feeling very anxious about him; for he looked so ill, and out of spirits, the night before he left Brighton, that he needs all our care, to cheer him."

"I am sure *you* need more care at present, Helen; you are looking like a ghost!"

"Am I?" she asked with a sad smile. "I am only anxious about poor Arthur. I should be quite well, if he were here."

"Go to bed, dear Helen. You will suffer for this, to-morrow."

"I could not sleep. I must sit up, for Arthur!"

Mrs. Huntingdon consulted her watch.—

"He will not come to night;—the last train came in, half-an-hour ago."

"But it may have been detained. Do let me sit up a little longer!" she pleaded.

"It will be useless, my dear."

A servant at this moment entered the room.—"John has been to the station, ma'am, and the train has come in; but Mr. Arthur was not in it."

"Was there any note, or message?" gasped Helen.

"No, ma'am."

"I will go to bed now, if you like," she said, turning meekly towards Mrs. Huntingdon.

"Come then, dear; I will go up with you, and put you to bed."

She really felt for the poor young girl, who was being so early inured to the cares and anxieties of a world, which she had thought so happy. She dismissed the maid, and tended her herself; and after Helen had lain down, she still sat beside her, looking pityingly, on the young, sad face.

"You are very kind to me," Helen began; "and I love

you for it! If I do not live much longer, remember that I said so—will you?—But for you, I should feel, very, very lonely!”

The innocent, confiding look, of the soft, loving eyes, went deep into the heart of the worldling—deeper, aye, far deeper, than Helen imagined!

“Yes, it is very good of you, to be fond of such a poor, weak, stupid little thing as I; for I know now, that I am very dull and ignorant—”

“Indeed, my child, you are not so! Why should you think it?”

“Because”—and she sobbed helplessly—“Arthur must have discovered that I am not clever enough for him; or he would not have tired of me, so soon! I used to think myself clever, and handsome, and—everything that was attractive. I used to be very proud and vain; but, now, I see myself as I am; and I know, that I was miserably blinded!”

“Hush! dear, Helen. Your illness makes you see things in a gloomy light. To-morrow you will be more cheerful.”

“Yes—if he come! But, do you think he *will* come to-morrow?”

“If not, we shall be sure to hear from him.”

And, with that faint glimmering of comfort, Helen was obliged to content herself; and, soon after, worn-out with fatigue, she fell into a heavy sleep.

Mrs. Huntingdon sat watching her, till—strange, in *her*—her eyes were dim with evidences of feeling, such as she had not known for years.

“Would that she were less innocent, and childish, and trusting!” she thought. “Or, would that *I* had never crossed her path! How weak and ill she looks!”

Helen came down-stairs the next morning, looking pale and haggard.

“Has the post come in, yet?” she asked.

“I expect it every minute, dear.—Oh! here it is!—a letter for each of us.”

Helen read hers through, twice; and then, handed it to Mrs. Huntingdon. “Read! read!” she said, in a choking voice.

She obeyed.

"MY DEAREST WIFE,—I fear that you were sadly disappointed at my non-arrival; and, believe me, love, your disappointment cannot have been greater than mine was. I now write, to say, that business of importance will detain me for a fortnight. Do keep up your spirits; and let me find my little wife, on my return, as fresh and rosy, as she was, when I first knew her. I will write frequently, dear, and shall expect a letter from you *every day*; so, don't disappoint me.

"Ever your devoted,

"ARTHUR."

"'Business of importance!'" ejaculated Helen. "What business can *he* have?"

"We don't know, my dear; but, with his large fortune, it is not unlikely, that he *may* have some affairs to transact."

"He has plenty of people to manage them for him."

"Yes love; but those very people may occasionally need to consult him."

Helen mused. "He says nothing about Brooks," she remarked, after a time.

"No, how could he, my dear? If you remember, Mr. Brooks was to start immediately, for the Continent."

"True! Well, at all events, it is a comfort to think, that he is not with that man!"

(Mrs. Huntingdon did not think it essential to mention, that *her* letter was from "that man," who had not left England!)

"You are a jealous little thing!"

"Yes, I confess it.—Now, I appeal to you.—Is it right, that a friend should possess more influence over a young husband, than his wife?"

Mrs. Huntingdon kissed her, and changed the subject.

"I forgot to tell you, my dear, that one of my relations is coming here for a little while. His name is Bushby;—he is a cousin of mine."

"I did not know you had any relations."

"None, save this one. He is no very great favourite of mine; and I doubt whether you will like him."



MR. WILSON.

MR. BUSHBY arrived ; and Helen, at the first glance, made up her mind not to like him. He was a slightly-made, pale man, with a very soft voice, and smooth manners, and an air of deference that was painful, for it amounted to absolute servility. He had plenty of "small talk" at his command ; and the conversation ambled on, at an even trot, during dinner, and after it. At length, Mrs. Huntingdon, who, Helen could see, was terribly bored by her visitor, abruptly asked,—

"When is Mr. Wilson coming?"

"The day after to-morrow," he replied ; and did not resume his amble for some time.

Helen saw, that Mrs. Huntingdon was that evening very anxious to get her off to bed ; and she rightly guessed, that a confabulation was about to take place between the cousins. She wished them good night, early ; but she could not sleep for some time.

"I wonder," she thought, "whether this Mr. Wilson will be as disagreeable as his friend. Oh ! how I dislike him ! I hope he will go, in a week ! I wonder, if Mr. Wilson will stop long. I hope he will leave, before Arthur returns ;—if not, I trust he will not sit long over the wine ! I hope he is not fond of shooting, or riding, or billiards, or long walks ! I do hope we are not going to have a house full of visitors.—I could not bear it ! Ah, me ! how selfish I am !—How they are talking !"

Her room was over the drawing-room ; and, till she fell

asleep, she could hear the voices of Mrs. Huntingdon and her cousin, engaged in most earnest conversation.

The next day, great preparations were made for Mr. Wilson. He was to have his own sitting-room, bed-room, and dressing-room, with an adjoining bed-chamber for his valet. Much consultation was held between the cousins, as to his tastes in all things—even to the minutest trifles. In fact, they seemed to regard him as a sort of mitigated king, or emperor; and Helen, as a natural consequence, began to dislike him most cordially, and to picture him to herself, as a whiskered, moustached fop, without one grain of common-sense to bless himself withal.

He came at last. Helen was in her room, when she heard the rumbling of wheels. The sound ceased; and there was a loud peal at the bell. In another minute, her ear was greeted by all the noises, incidental to an arrival;—strange voices—heavy feet—the bumping of weighty packages up the stairs. This last sound, made Helen sigh; for it seemed to forebode a lengthened stay, on the part of the visitor.

Though it wanted an hour and a half to dinner time, she resolved not to go down stairs; but sat at her window, trying to read. The dressing-bell rang at last; and Helen heard Mrs. Huntingdon's door open and shut. In a few minutes, Helen's maid came to dress her.

"If you please, madam, Mrs. Huntingdon desires me to tell you, with her love, that she would like you, if you have no objection, to wear your pink dress, with the black lace flounces. Mrs. Huntingdon would have come herself, but she has been with Mr. Wilson, up to the last moment."

"Very well," replied Helen; and the desired dress was donned.

She felt still more inclined to dislike this Mr. Wilson. Why should Mrs. Huntingdon make so much fuss about him?—and of what earthly consequence was it, whether he admired *her*, or not?

"There is Mr. Wilson, madam," said Catherine, pointing to the garden.

Helen glanced that way; and her feelings underwent a complete change. She saw an old gentleman, tall and slight, and of very upright bearing. His hair, white as snow,

was taken back from a high, intellectual forehead. His features, delicate and refined, agreed in expression with his mild blue eyes, and spoke of a gentle and loving heart—of spotless integrity of soul—of a spirit, chastened and subdued. At least, Helen thought all this, as she gazed upon the old man. He was strolling quietly along the lawn, stooping now and then, to smell, or admire, some flower. Helen began to think,—“I wonder if he will stay long. I hope so.”

In a short time, Mrs. Huntingdon joined her. She glanced, approvingly, at Helen's attire.

“You look well, dear child. I was particularly anxious that you should do so to-day; for I have given a glowing account of my little daughter!”

“I fear, the attractions of pink silk and black lace would have been more profitably bestowed on a younger beau,” was Helen's smiling rejoinder.

“Not at all, dear. Mr. Wilson admires beauty of every kind. He has the most refined tastes, and is a truly charming person; and as good as he is charming. I am sure you cannot fail to like him.”

Helen silently echoed her opinion; and even felt a little nervous tremor, lest Mr. Wilson should not like her. But she need not have feared; in five minutes, she was chatting with the kindly old man, as freely, as though she had known him many years; and she closed her eyes that night, with a feeling, that she had made—not an acquaintance, but, a friend; and a certain peace, to which she had for a long while been a stranger, seemed to shadow her soul.

The next morning she was down-stairs, before Mr. Wilson; but he soon followed.

“Ah!” he said, with his cheerful smile, taking both her hands, and holding them while he spoke,—“Ah! you are a little rustic! Is it possible for a pretty, fashionable young lady, to be up and stirring, and, moreover, down to breakfast, at this early hour?—Only ten o'clock!”

“Perhaps you don't know,” she laughingly replied, “that I was not always a ‘fashionable lady.’ I was brought up in a little country village; and my earliest and happiest—no, I mean,”—(she corrected herself, in some confusion)—“some of

my happiest—days, were passed in a little cottage, the whole of which, might almost be set down in this room.”

“It is not every fashionable lady, who would confess to as much!” he said, with an arch smile.

“I wish I had nothing more, to be ashamed of!” sighed Helen.

“You do not look, as if you could ever have done *much* that you would be ashamed to own,” he said.

“Ah! you don’t know me!—But here is Mrs. Huntingdon.”

He knew, by her hurried manner, that the subject must not be continued, in presence of that lady. It was odd; but Helen already felt more sympathy with this stranger, than with her friend and relation—Arthur’s mother!

“How well you are looking, Helen dear;—quite your old self again! Mr. Wilson, you are a good doctor!”

“This young lady, and I, are going to be very good friends, I am sure,” he replied. “If I mistake not, she is going to shew me all the prettiest walks in these very pretty grounds; and I shall ask her to be charitable enough, to drive with me.”

Helen blushed, and looked happy. Mrs. Huntingdon seemed intensely satisfied; though why, Helen did not know. That very day, they commenced operations; and Helen took Mr. Wilson to the brook, which he duly admired. Day after day, they were together; Mrs. Huntingdon always excusing herself from accompanying them, on the score of other engagements, but telling Helen, in private, that she could not endure rambling in a garden, and was inexpressibly delighted to get out of accompanying Mr. Wilson, without offending him.

In three days, they became so intimate, that Helen felt as if she had known him all her life. He called her “Helen”—“his child”—“his dear child;”—and she felt as if she had found a father, and began to love the dear old man with all her heart. One day, he stopped before a seat in the garden, and said,—

“Now my child, we will sit down here; and you shall give me the promised story of your life.”

“It was a very pleasant one,” said Helen; “a very, very

pleasant one—though I did not know it then!" she sighed.

"How?"

"I longed for a fine house, and fine clothes, and a carriage, and a man-servant. (We had none of those things then, you know;—we were poor.) I thought, that if I had all those things, I should be very happy. Since that, I have learnt, that they are worthless—utterly worthless!—and that the things I *then* possessed, were, (if I had but known it) of real value!"

"But, begin, my dear, as early as you can remember. What were your earliest impressions?"

"We lived in a little cottage. There was a small garden outside; and it had a rustic fence, dividing it from the road; and there was a little gravel path, down the centre of the garden, and two round beds of flowers—the borders, edged round with large pebbles. But mamma altered all this afterwards, (because it was vulgar, she said). She had the flower-beds destroyed, as well as the little path, on which papa used to walk to and fro in the evening; and she had what was the garden, paved, to look like a terrace, and an iron railing put in the place of the rustic one. All that, was long after poor papa's death; and I remember feeling sorry, to have the pretty flowers taken away,—not only because their perfume scented the room when the window was open, and because they looked so pretty, but, also, because poor papa used to be so fond of them. And I remember, that Marty and mamma had a quarrel, about some rose-trees, which papa had planted, and used to take care of; and that Marty said, mamma ought to be ashamed of herself, for rooting them up. Mamma gave Marty warning, I remember; but she didn't go—she never would!"

"Who was Marty?"

"Our servant;—the dearest creature in the world!—such a dear, good soul! How Marty loved me! How I loved her—and do still! Marty had not a fault—not a single fault.—Oh, yes! *one*, she had.—I don't think she was fond of mamma, though mamma was indefatigable in her efforts to improve her. Marty was not a good grammarian; and poor mamma, with her refinement of feeling, could not endure her grammatical blunders. Then, mamma thought poor

Marty vulgar—though *I* could never see her vulgarity;—mamma said, that must be, because *I*, too, was naturally vulgar.—I remember being very fond of playing at keeping a shop; and I used to choose the most vulgar names I could think of, for my dolls. (Mamma cured me of that, by throwing them in the fire. How I cried!) Then she taught me to play at going to court, and to balls; but it was heavy work, after the shop—not half such fun. I liked making mud pies, too.”

“But your father?”

“He died, when I was quite a child. How well I remember it! He was never very strong; and he made his cough worse, by changing our pew at church, for a draughty one, in the other aisle.”

“Why did he do that? Was it cheaper?”

“No, it was ten shillings dearer; but then, it was removed from the Thomson’s, whom mamma thought, vulgar people.”

“Yes, I see. Continue.”

“Then, papa got his feet wet through, because he would not buy himself a pair of galloshes. His coat, too, was very old; but he would not afford himself a new one. So, his cough grew worse and worse; till, one night, he came in, very ill indeed, covered with snow (he had put off buying an umbrella), and with his feet soaked in wet. His cough was very bad; and, when he coughed, he put his hand to his side. Marty was in a dreadful way, I remember—”

“Your mamma was—you mean?”

“No—Marty. You see, mamma was so accustomed to papa’s cough, that—”

“Was not Marty?”

“Oh! yes; but Marty was such an anxious creature. Mamma used to say, that Marty was terribly vulgar in her anxiety—she never could take things quietly.”

“Well, go on, my dear.”

“So, poor papa went to bed. The next morning, he was worse.”

“And your mamma sent for the doctor?”

“No; she could not send the page, because she was going to a sort of *fête* of the school children’s, and Mrs. Howard was to call for her in the pony-carriage; and Marty was too uncouth,

mamma thought, to open the door to Mrs. Howard. Mamma looked very pretty that day, I remember; she had a new bonnet and dress, and was in good spirits. She little thought, what was about to happen! While she was away, (for she stayed to luncheon with Mrs. Howard,) poor papa grew so much worse, that Marty sent for the doctor. Mamma was terribly frightened, when she came home, and went, directly, to papa. How ill he looked! He had been in dreadful pain; but, soon after mamma's return, he said that the pain was ceasing.—It was mortification, beginning! He died, soon after. Poor mamma! I was but a child, then, and did not know what I was saying; and I have often felt grieved, since, that I told her, what a pity it was, that she had had the new bonnet, instead of spending the money in galloshes for papa."

"Ah!" Mr. Wilson drew a long sigh. "But, how did you manage to live, after your father's death?"

"Mamma wrote to a person, whom she called 'old Stub;' I think his name was 'Stubley,' or 'Stubbins,' or something of the sort. I believe he was a sort of distant relation of papa's; but, I never felt much interest in him, as mamma always said he was a vulgar old wretch.—He was not an *old* man, either—not more than fifty, I believe, if as much. However, vulgar or not, he proved a friend in need; for he allowed her two hundred a year, until I married; when he took off one hundred, which, I think, was very shabby.—Mean, stingy old thing!"

"Well, and after that, you grew up, into a beautiful young lady, and fell in love with Arthur Huntingdon—Eh?"

"I grew up, to be a very proud, unamiable, self-willed, heartless girl!—And now comes a part of my story, which I can never recall, without sorrow and humiliation."

"If it pain you, dear child, do not tell it."

"Yes, I will tell *you*.—Of all our friends, the Howards were the best and dearest. Whatever is good in me, I owe to dear Mrs. Howard—and John, and Marty. John was ten years my senior; but he saw something in me, that pleased him, in spite of my faults. We became engaged. What a happy time, that was! Never, never again, shall I know such happiness! We were to be married, very soon. Oh! how I wish—"

She checked herself, and turned aside, to conceal a crimson flush, that had come over her face.

"Go on, my dear."

"Suddenly, Mrs. Huntingdon, whom mamma had not seen since they were girls at school, came to stay with us. That was a painful time for me, I remember; for Mrs. Huntingdon, with her fashionable notions, thought nothing of the Howards, whom we had, till then, considered such grand people; and she used to make me angry, by ridiculing John;—not that there was anything in him to ridicule, for he was as noble, in form, as in mind—how infinitely superior to the polished, brainless *gentlemen*, I have since met!"

Her cheek glowed; and her eyes sparkled with enthusiasm. The old man sighed, and thought—"Alas! alas! The old story! a young girl's happiness bartered away, by her designing mother!"

Helen continued,—

"How I loved him! How proud I was, that he thought me—*me*, little Helen Grey—worthy to be *his* wife!—But I am making my story too long;—there is not much more of it.—I was so fond of John, that I felt quite miserable, at the idea of leaving Brockley, on a visit to Staniswood; but we went."

She hesitated.

"Continue, my child."

"Oh! you will despise me! and I cannot bear to lose your esteem!"

"Nay, dear Helen, all have *some* black spot in their lives! Perhaps, repentance has washed yours out!"

"No," she said, sighing heavily; "no, my sin was very, very great!" She continued speaking, in rapid tones, as if to get rid of the recital, as quickly as possible. "I came here—allowed myself to be dazzled by the miserable gauds, for which I had been sighing, all my life. My wretched vanity—my jealousy of a person who had done me no wrong—became enlisted, in the conquest of Arthur Huntingdon. I, betrothed to the best and noblest of men, forsook my allegiance—broke my plighted word. Honor, gratitude, friendship, I counted as naught. I deceived him, who trusted me as his own soul—trampled on his great heart—wounded his pride.—I—I accepted Arthur!"

She buried her face in her hands, and wept.

"It was a great sin, Helen; but you have repented of it."

"Repented! What repentance could atone for sins such as mine?" she sobbed. "And I am not forgiven. No; the avenging rod has pursued me!—my life has been wretched!—wretched!"

"My dear child, your notions are very false! Do you not know, that *no* repentance on our part,—no, not even if we went on repenting for a million years—could *atone* for sin?—that He, alone, who made the One great atonement, can wash away our sins? Repentance, is the *road* to Salvation, since it leads us, if it be genuine, to Him, who has promised it, to those, that are his true disciples—(and that is what I meant by saying, that it had, perhaps, washed yours out)—but it is not the Salvation itself; as well might you say, that this path, before us, is the house, because it *leads* to the house. You must not mistake the means, for the end, dear child. The only way in which a man may be said to *atone* for a fault, is, when he makes what reparation he can, to his fellow creatures, whom that fault has injured. He then atones to his fellow men, but not to God—no, Another must do that!—And you seem to look upon the Almighty, as upon a terrible, avenging spirit. Know you not, that he afflicts in *mercy*—just as a wise surgeon amputates a limb, to save a life? The poor thief, who hung in agony on the cross, thought, that the hand of an avenging God, was stretched forth, in anger, against him; but the punishment proved the saving of his soul, since, but for his cross, he had not met his Saviour! Oh! my child, our greatest misfortune often proves our greatest blessing!"

How his words reminded her of Grace Willingham! He paused, then added,—

"But we will talk of this more fully another day. Now, tell me the rest of your story, dear child. You are happy in your marriage? Your husband loves you?"

"Judge whether he loves me.—It is but a year, since our marriage; and he is away from me!"

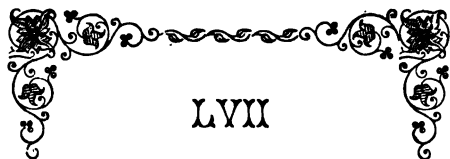
"Let us go in, now, Helen; this narrative has been too much for you."

"But, you will not turn against me? You will not despise me?" she pleaded.

"Poor dear child, no! I love you all the better, for your troubles!"

"Oh! you don't know, how I turned to you, from the first! I felt, as if you understood me—and no one does that!"

"How little that poor girl imagines," he thought "*what* a portrait she has drawn of her mother! Well can I picture to myself, the struggle in the young, true heart—for true and pure it was, and has remained, in spite of the poisonous weeds that were sought to be planted in it—the struggle, to reconcile her mother's precepts, with her own sense of all that was good and upright. Poor girl! Poor girl!"



HELEN'S LETTER.

MR. RUSHBY remained only a week at Staniswood ; but the old man seemed to have taken up his abode there ; and Helen hoped that his visit would be a long one.

Two letters were handed to her, one morning ; the first of them was from her husband.

"How strange it is," she said, "that each letter bears a different post-mark. He must be travelling ;—I don't believe in this 'business!'"

After lamenting, as usual, his absence, he added,—

"And I shall not be with you so soon as I had hoped ; for I am going abroad. I have not felt very well of late ; and think, that change of air, and scene, may do me good. I shall not, however, be absent from you for any length of time ; so, do not worry yourself, my darling."

She dropped the letter. "No, truly," she thought ; "nor will I use one word of persuasion, to induce him to return ! As 'love begets love,' even so does indifference engender a corresponding feeling !"

She felt deeply hurt. Her pride was wounded.

The other letter drew from her an exclamation of delight. It was from Mrs. Howard.

"How good of her to write ! Oh ! how good !" and she pressed it to her lips.

It was as follows :—

"I have often wondered, my dear Helen, whether your thoughts ever travel back, to Brockley, and your old friends ;

for ~~none~~ have often dwelt upon you, whom I used to consider my third child. Now that Lucy no longer sits in her old place, I cling yet more closely to the time, when she and you played together at my knee;—a pleasant, happy time, was it not, my dear? I should much like to hear from you; and I hope that you will write to me, when you have time to do so; for, though you may have gayer friends, you have not a truer one, than I am, dear Helen. I trust that you have not forgotten the talks we used to have, on those quiet, Sunday evenings, years back; and that your thoughts now and then rest on something better than the mere externals of life—of which, my Helen, you used to be somewhat too fond. Remember, that though we may manage to get on without religion, in *prosperity*, we miss its soothing influence, when assailed by adversity. God's love may seem very valueless, so long as we are fed, to repletion, with the love and hospitality of our fellow-creatures, and steeped, to the very lips, in happy enjoyment of all that we care for; but, let these things be withdrawn—let the waves of adversity beat upon our hearts—let that which is worse than the loss of houses and lands—the loss of happiness—fall upon us; and then, nothing, but the love of God, can help us—nothing else, can pour oil upon the billows, and make them calm. Helen love, if you are ever assailed by trouble of any kind, remember, that you are very dear to me; and, if I can, at any time, help you, let me again be your friend, as I was long ago.

"That which I have written, may prove distasteful; but oh! my child, it has been dictated by much love—much yearning after your welfare.

"Your sincere friend,

"L. HOWARD."

The very next post, brought Mrs. Howard Helen's reply.—

"MY DEAR, KIND FRIEND,—If you could have seen my tears of happiness, on reading your good, generous words, you would have known, that I did not find them 'distasteful.' How kind of you, to remember me at all, except as a vain, heartless, selfish worldling, undeserving of a single thought from you, or yours. I have not merited your forgiveness! When I read your letter, I thought, 'How can she love me? How can she forgive me?' And my heart answered, 'Nay,

you judge her by yourself! *She is a Christian!* Ah! how I wish I were a Christian! All the people whom I have loved best, and who have shewn me the most real kindness have been Christians. You, and " (a name had been written, and rubbed out) "Lucy, and Marty, and Grace Willingham, and Mr. Wilson,—all my best and kindest friends,—love God, and fear Him, and are happy and cheerful. They are not always *talking* about religion; but they *feel* it. I can see, that all their actions are guided by the commands of God. Would that I resembled them!

"When shall I see you again? Perhaps, never; for I think the sight of Brockley would almost drive me mad, dearly though I love it, and often as I dwell on the one happy time—gone for ever. Little did I think, that those were my golden days! Will you write to me again—often? If you knew the comfort your letters would afford me, you could not refuse. Will you give my love to dear Lucy? And will you tell Marty you have heard from me?—I know she will be pleased. No one else, in Brockley, would care to be told that I remember them; and it is a sad grief to me, to think so.

"Your grateful child,

"HELEN."

"She is not spoilt," said Mrs. Howard, handing the letter to her son.

He hurried with it out of the room. When he returned, some hours later, he said, in a trembling voice,—

"Bless you!—bless you for your kindness to her! You say truly, that she is not spoilt. Hers, was a true, and noble heart, marred by that cursed, worldly mother, of hers!"

"John, do you not see, that she is learning humility?"

"She is," he replied. "Pride lay at the bottom of many of her faults; let that be conquered, and—"

He stopped, rebuked by his mother's involuntary glance.

"Ah, John!"

"Yes," he said, in reply to her look; "I do well, to talk of pride!—do I not? But for my arrogance—my infatuated self-love—I might—who knows? I might not have lost her!"

After a short silence, he resumed, very sadly,—

"She is unhappy, poor child! The whole tone of that letter betrays the fact too plainly."

"Yes, John. I shall pray for her—I shall watch over her. If need be, I will befriend her."

"Mother," he said, after a short pause, "it is pleasant, to forgive!"

"Have you at last learnt so, my dear child?"

"I have. Her letter reminds me of that passage,— 'Vengeance is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord.' A heavy judgment has fallen upon her, poor girl; upon her, instead of upon her guilty mother!"

"Nay, call it not a judgment; her trials may be sent in love, even as bitter medicine is sent to save from death! And how know you, but that trials await her mother also?"

"I hope—" he impetuously began.—"No, no—I hate her; but I will try not to wish her harm!"

"My dear, you are becoming a hero! for 'He that ruleth his spirit is greater than he that taketh a city.' You have made me very happy, my dear John!"

That night, he closed his eyes, with a more tranquil heart, than he had known for many a day. And why? For the first time in his life, he had tasted that great luxury, the forgiveness of an injury.



SELF-KNOWLEDGE.

DAYS, weeks, months, rolled on; but Arthur came not. Helen had grown accustomed to his absence; nay, when he spoke, in his letters, of the probability of his speedy return, she felt a pang of something very like regret; since his arrival was to be the signal for her dear old friend's departure. Two or three times, he had made a feint of preparing to leave; but Mrs. Huntingdon's entreaties, and Helen's looks of desolate sorrow, had prevailed, and still he lingered on.

"But," he said, "when the young beau comes, the old one will give him place."

"Why?" asked Helen. "Why must you leave us, when Arthur returns? I feel, as if all our peace would vanish, with you! And I want you to be as good to Arthur, as you have been to me—to teach him as many happy, soothing lessons as you have taught me! Do stay!"

The old man fondly smoothed down the silky waves of hair; but sadly replied,—

"No, my child. I have tried my best, as an old and worn-out pilgrim, to shew a young and weak fellow-traveller the safest path on her journey. I have tried to lead your untaught spirit, into the same path of peace, whence I, in my young and wilful days, departed. You have now learnt to apply to the only true and unfailing source of comfort; and if you,—young, fair, beloved—cannot lead your husband into the same straight and narrow way, is it likely that I could?"

"But do stay,—if only to comfort me, if my troubles return!" she pleaded.

"Alas, Helen! my lessons have, indeed, been wasted, if you know not where to find better consolation, than that of your fellow-mortals, who are weak and unstable as yourself!"

She hung her head. "Not so," she replied; "even *your* consoling words—your unvarying kindness—would not have made me so quietly happy and contented, as I have become, had I not been strengthened by the Being, to whom you have taught me to look up—not, with *fear*, as I used to do, but with confidence, and love, and boundless, unspeakable gratitude. Though great trials may yet be in store for me, I think that I can never again feel entirely desolate—at least, not for long; since I know, that they are all ordered for my good, if I choose so to take them. I can see, now, that all the troubles I have had, were necessary for me. I may have seemed, to others, merely a young, giddy, inexperienced girl, a little spoilt by flattery, but with good principles, and a good enough heart, in the main,—not *far* from the road to salvation. I *now* see, that I was rapidly speeding along the road to destruction! In my heart, were all the qualities, that lead people to break the commandments of God. He has said, 'Thou shalt have none other gods but me;' and declares, that He is 'a jealous God,' and will have the *first* offering of the heart of man. Now, when we see before us, two modes of acting—one, commanded by Him, the other, prompted by His great Enemy,—if we yield to the latter temptation (as we often do—not unthinkingly, but knowingly—deliberately), we, for the time, abandon the service of God, for that of His deadly foe. Though we do not outwardly bow down before the image of Baal, we have, in our hearts, the same feeling which used to actuate those who did so,—indifference to God—contempt of His commands—in short, *want of love towards Him*, which, after all, constitutes the sin, in the eye of the 'jealous God.' I used never to think of this—never to imagine, that I was committing the sin of idolatry. I thought that command was intended for ancient—not for modern—times."

"Ah! my child, we are, all of us, too prone to think, that such and such a commandment is meant to apply to others—not, to ourselves. We rich people, while repeating the ten commandments, are too apt to think, that *we* are not likely to

infringe them—that they are broken by the poor and uneducated alone. Perhaps, we have a dim notion that we may possibly ‘covet,’ or, ‘bear false witness,’ (in ignorance of course!) or, it may be, slightly infringe upon the holiness of the ‘Sabbath day;’ but the graver crimes—such as murder, theft, and the like—we complacently hand over to our poorer brethren, since, of course, ladies and gentlemen are not likely to commit *them*! How do these self-righteous Pharisees know, but that they may one day fall into those very sins? How do they know, but that their hatred and envy, or some other evil passion, may so far get the better of them, as to induce them to commit murder?—or, that great privation, accompanied by sudden and tempting opportunity, may lead them on, to theft? How can we, any of us, tell, what temptations lie before us? I have often felt struck by that indignant exclamation of Hazael’s,—‘Is thy servant a dog, that he should do these things?’ Yet he did afterwards commit these very acts, the mere thought of which, he had once so much abhorred.”

“Yes,” replied Helen; and when we remember, that sin, in *thought*—I mean, unchecked—is, in the sight of God, the same as sin, in deed, I think that few people go through the world, without virtually breaking most of the commandments. I was an idolater—a worshipper of the world, rather than of God;—a Sabbath breaker;—yes, and sometimes, in thought, even a *murderer*! for I have hated so intensely, as even—I shudder to think of it—to wish for the death of the hated person; and, if a glance of mine could have killed, that glance would not have been withheld. I have borne false witness; that is to say, I have repeated, with exaggerations, and without sufficiently inquiring into the truth or falsehood of the facts I related, nay, often, in my heart, *feeling* them to be false, anecdotes, disadvantageous to the characters of the persons I disliked. I have coveted—yes, even to a point that has made my existence a burthen to me. And, if I have not broken the rest of the commandments, it has been only from absence of temptation—not, from strength of principle. I believe that I was wicked enough—unfortified enough—to yield to any sin that might have assailed me.”

“Think ever thus, my Helen! and you will then pray daily, for the only strength that can render you invulnerable to

the attacks of the great enemy of mankind. Though your foot may slip, you will not fall. Though you may be wounded, it will not be unto death ! ”

She bent down, and reverently kissed his hands. He continued :—

“ My dear child, if you are ever told, that you think too badly of yourself, mistrust those who say so ! Such people mean to be your friends, but are, in reality, your worst enemies. You *cannot* think too meanly of yourself ; for, the more you feel your own miserable weakness, the more earnestly will you pray for strength.”

This conversation took place, as they were walking home from a neighbouring village, whither she and her old friend had gone, to see and console a poor invalid. The religion of this old man did not consist in words alone ; for that would have been no religion at all. With him, it was a deep and vital principle ;—love to man, springing out of love to God. The creed of the Saviour is love, and, if sincerely believed in, and felt, must produce unselfishness—care for the poor and helpless. Helen had been taught, in childhood, rather to shrink from the poor, as being coarse and unrefined. But her good friend made her taste the pleasure of alleviating distress,—that pleasure, which, once enjoyed, proves so far greater than any other kind of self-indulgence ; and, when once she had entered the humble dwellings of her poor brethren, she found, among them, traits of simple integrity—of real nobility of soul—of disinterested kindness towards each other—such as she had seldom met with among her own class.

There was something about her kind mentor, that reminded her of the old days at Brockley, when one, now dead to her, had been wont to exercise a similar influence for her good ; though then, alas, her haughty spirit, unsubdued by the merciful chastening of her Heavenly Father, had rebelled against—or, at all events, had failed to appreciate—the wisdom of the lessons set before her. She had been blind, while she had fancied that she saw plainly. Now, that, which had been dark to her, appeared light as day ; while that, which had before shone most radiantly, sank into nethermost darkness.

And she sighed, and wept very bitterly, to think, that the scales had fallen from her eyes, too late !



AN OLD MAN'S WORDS.

It was February. Arthur had been away, rather more than three months; yet Helen was contented—nay, happy. Suddenly, a letter arrived, to say, that he, and his friend Brooks, would be at Staniswood in a few days. A chill stole to her heart, as she handed the letter to Mr. Wilson. The cloud was, for a brief space of time, reflected on his face; but, with an effort, he turned smilingly towards her, saying,—

“It is time he were home.”

“But *you* will not leave?” she petitioned, with a tremor playing about her lips.

“Would Arthur be pleased, to find that *he* was not all in all? I could not expect you, my child, to ramble about, with a quiet old man, when a young one had a better right to your company—”

“But,” she eagerly interrupted, “Arthur will be eternally with Mr. Brooks—”

“My dear Helen, it is possible that it may be so; but, don’t throw him upon the man’s companionship, any more than you can help. If Arthur see, that you appreciate his society, and take pleasure in it, rest assured, your company will be preferred to that of Mr. Brooks.”

“But still—” she urged.

“‘Still,’ I must go. I wish to leave you and Arthur together. If I could take Mr. Brooks with me, I would willingly do so; but the man seems to cling to your husband, with leech-like tenacity.”

"Indeed, though, not even Arthur could console me in your absence—"

He gently laid his hand upon her lips. "My dear, not thus should a wife speak of her husband! Nay, do not weep, poor child!—we shall meet again, I trust.—If not—"

"Oh! don't say 'if!' We *shall* meet again!"

"I trust we shall; though I am told that my life is precarious—that I may be suddenly called away. But all things are under the direction of a Higher Power, and work together for good; to them that fear Him."

"What do you mean? You are in danger of sudden death?" she asked, terror-stricken by his words.

"*Danger!*—In *danger*, of being called away, to meet that Great One, who died for me—who loves me—with whom I would fain be at rest! *Danger*, Helen?"

"Oh! I know it would be well for *you*; but, for me:—left desolate here—without a human creature, to care for me!"

"Poor child!"

"I often think, that if my dear father had lived, he would have been to me what you are now—so gentle, so good, so unselfish—so true to himself and to his God! You remind me of my dear, lost father!"

"He is not lost to you for ever, Helen. We shall all meet together, in the Eternal Presence!"

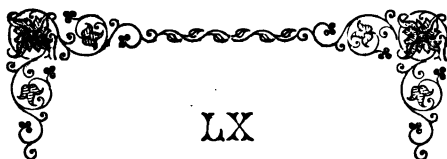
"Yes," she sighed; "and then, these trials, which I have so deserved, will have passed away, and will appear light;—now, they are very, very hard to bear!"

She drooped her head, and wept. After a while she resumed,—

"Yes, I will do my duty by Arthur. I will not be content with bewailing my past errors—I will turn them into beacons to warn me against fresh ones.—If God will aid me."

"My dear, dear child, you have rightly learnt the lessons your Heavenly Taskmaster has sought to teach you;—humility—submission—gentleness—patience! Persevere in the upward path; for every step will be easier, and will be one trial less, on your way to your eternal home!"

A few days more; and Helen sat, one night, weeping over the dying embers in her room.—Her dear old friend had left.



ARTHUR AND HIS SHADOW—THE NUBLEYS—MARTY'S
OPINION.

THE thrill of pleasure with which Helen sprang to meet her husband, was suddenly checked; for his shadow stood in the doorway. Yes, her enemy was still with Arthur, and was yet to stand between him and her! The gleam of joy vanished from her face. Drawing back a step or two, she bowed stiffly to the intruder.

"Why, Helen," said Arthur, "this is not the reception you should give to an old friend! You *shall* shake hands!"

And, taking her unwilling hand in his, he placed it within that of Brooks.

Though she could not help the action, she glanced, haughtily, at the object of her dislike; who, in return, bestowed on her, the old pitying smile—far more repugnant to her feelings, than one of defiance would have been.

But, before the evening was at an end, she was compelled to acknowledge, that she had been unjust; for Brooks no longer monopolised Arthur, as he had formerly done. Still more was she surprised, when, the next day, he said,—

"You ought to be out, this fine morning, Arthur; and I am sure Mrs. Huntingdon must have a thousand things to say to you, after your long absence. You cannot do better, than go for a stroll, while I write a number of letters, which must be sent off to-day."

Joyfully, and with a grateful look towards the speaker (though she did not quite approve of his dictation), Helen complied with the advice; and, as she leant upon her husband's arm, and listened to his gentle words of affection, and his schemes for their future happiness, she felt reminded of days that were past, before the shadows had been thrown across their path; and she ventured to look forward to the future, with more of hope, than had been hers, for a long, long time.

Arthur was changed. His wild and variable fits of excitement, had given place to a quiet, thoughtful manner; and though his glance was, at times, full of sadness, she thought that it was caused by remorse, for the sorrow he had caused her.

Yes, that morning she was very happy!

"You must forget the past, dear love," he said, fondly raising her hand to his lips. "Forget the gloom that rested upon the first year of our married life. Never again, I trust, shall I cause you unhappiness!"

"Nay," she murmured, "I was unreasonable. I have heard, that people are never *very* happy, in the first year of their marriage. They expect too much from each other; I know I did, from you."

"Helen dearest, I must tell you one thing. If there is any change in me for the better, it is owing, almost entirely, to a person, for whom you seem to entertain an invincible repugnance—"

Her brow grew dark. She interrupted him;—

"Don't let us talk of him—"

"But I must, Helen. I repeat, that, to him do I owe, more than I can express. If he were to leave!—Helen, let me entreat you, to try to conquer your prejudice against him!"

"First, tell me, what is the secret of your connection with him; and I may then, perhaps, try to do so."

"I cannot, Helen."

"Arthur, is this man *always* to be with us?"

"As long as he will remain."

She sighed. Already, were her dreams of happiness fading away. He continued, very earnestly:—

"I repeat, that he is my best friend. I do beseech you, to

conquer your most unfounded dislike to him. And I further entreat, that, if *I* ever conceive a prejudice against him, you will not encourage me in such injustice. Above all, never again try to elude him; you know not what the consequences might be!"

Again did she call to mind, the look of shrinking terror, with which he had encountered the reproof of that inscrutable man; and again did she feel something like contempt, for her husband. But she tried to shake off the impression; and soon after, she changed the subject.

"Do you know, that mamma, and my new papa-in-law, are coming here to-morrow?—and Marty—dear Marty!"

"Yes; and I feel curious to see the youthful bridegroom. Though he was at our wedding, I did not notice him," he replied, in the same merry tone in which he had before spoken.

"I don't like him," pursued Helen; "at least, I used not to do so; and it is not likely that he is improved."

"We don't know what matrimony may have done for him," said Arthur.

"Do you know, Arthur, I am not quite sure, that mamma likes him so well, as she anticipated doing."

"Serve her right!"

"Oh! hush, Arthur!"

"But, what makes you think so, love?"

"Her last few letters have not been written in so happy a tone."

"Well, we shall see," he replied.

And they did see. Mr. and Mrs. Nubley were evidently not on the same terms, that Mr. and Mrs. Grey had been. Mr. Nubley had a quick, impatient manner of addressing his spouse, whom Helen could not help fancying afraid of him. She called to mind, former days,—her good father's gentle and forbearing manner—*too* gentle and indulgent, too yielding and patient, for his own comfort; and she thought, that her mother must sorrowfully recall that time, and feel, that she had not truly appreciated a worth, too modest and unassuming, to force itself into notice. Mrs. Nubley had a painful habit, of watching her partner's eye; and, if she happened to be occupied by something else, his first word, addressed to

her, made her start nervously, and reply, "Yes, dearest," in such a quaking, spasmodic voice, as convinced Helen, that the newly-married pair were not on the best terms with each other.

Marty evidently bore Mr. Nubley the most cordial dislike; and her manner towards her mistress, was gentler than of old, as though she pitied her.

"I say, Miss Helen," said Marty, the first time they were alone, "it was a bad day for her, when she first come across that there Nubley!"

"You mean, that it was a pity, mamma married again?"

"Yes, my dear;—and a great, great pity, that she took him in so."

"Took him in? How, Marty?"

"Why, when I was here last, didn't I hear her a thankin' of you for givin' her that there pony-shay, and them there ponies?"

(Marty's education had been sadly neglected of late; for Mrs. Nubley's whole time and attention were now devoted to her Edwin).

"Yes, Marty, dear.—But I don't like to be reminded of these things."

But Marty did not heed; she went on.—

"And the page, and the new furniture for the drawin'-room, and the ceilin' all covered over with big cabbage-roses and naked babbies—"

"Yes, yes, Marty—you mean Cupids," said Helen; laughing, in spite of herself.

"Well, I know'd *you'd* done it all. But, as soon as we got to Brockley, missis shut the shutters, and wore black, and made believe as a rich relation had died, and left her a lot of money, and that *she* had bought the shay, and—"

"Yes, go on, Marty."

"And then, that there Nubley, (who's so fond of money, he'd dig up his own grandmother, and eat her too, for a five pound note!)—he come to see missis. *I* know'd, well enough, what he was after, bless you! He comes the very next day after missis had driv' out in the shay; and he slips a shillin' into my hand.—'Marty,' says he, 'I hope your charmin' ~~missis~~ is a gettin' over her grief. Has she lost a near relation.

he says. 'No, sir,' says I. 'Indeed,' he says, surprised like. 'But she wears very deep mournin'.' 'Yes sir,' says I. Then he says, 'P'raps she wears her mournin' as a token of respect, more than of grief?' 'P'raps so,' says I. So, when he finds he can't get no more out of me, he leaves his card, and goes. But, next day, he comes back, and for many days after; till at last missis tells me she's goin' to be married; and I run cryin' into the kitchen. But if she's not sorry she's married him, my name's not Marty!"

"What makes you think so?"

"She's afraid to call her soul her own! After the first month, they led a cat and dog life. She found out, that he hadn't much money, and kept a sharp look out on what he had; and he found out, that she hadn't a farthin'. One day after dinner (I think he drinks, mind you!) they quarrelled dreadful; and he spoke so loud, that I couldn't help hearin' what he said. And he says,—'You've swindled me into marryin' you! D'you think I'd have sacrificed myself to a old woman like you, if I hadn't thought you'd *some*thin'?' Then she answered, very sharp,—'Haven't I told you, that the money, left me by my relation, was to go from me, if I married?' 'You didn't tell me, till I'd married you!' he shouted, louder than before. 'You said you loved me!' says she, very loud too. 'You were the swindler—not me!' Then I heard her screech out, 'Oh! Marty!—Marty!' and I run to her, and found him a shakin' of her, like as if she'd bin a rat, and he a terrier dog. But the minute he seen me, he begins a kissin' of her; and he says to me,—'Your mistress has got hysterics,' says he. 'There—there, my dear, don't take on so!' And he kisses her again. The mean, sneaking ruffiner! I could have spit in his nasty face—I could! 'She's better now,' he says; 'you may go, my good Marty.' But, before I went, I seen the decanter lyin' smashed on the floor by her, and I know'd he'd throw'd it at her. Since then, poor missis isn't the same woman she was. She's broken down, like, and afraid of her life, of that fellow!"

How Helen's heart sank, at this disclosure of mutual treachery! She resolved, however, to succour her mother, worthy or unworthy.

"Mamma," she said, that evening, "do you think it quik-

prudent in you, to refuse to receive, any longer, the—my compensation for the money you lost by my marriage? I know, that the addition of a gentleman, makes a great difference in a family; he cannot endure all the little shifts and contrivances, that are necessary, in order to make a narrow income meet."

"Indeed, my sweet child, you have started the very theme, that I wished to broach. With all my reluctance to trespass on your generosity, love, I must confess, that your liberal munificence would be more welcome, than I can express. I find, that Mr. Nubley is not so well off, as I imagined him to be;—in fact, he is, at present, somewhat in straitened circumstances. Added to this, that horrid old Stub has had the meanness to discontinue his allowance; saying, that no woman, at my time of life, would dream of marrying again, unless with a view to a comfortable settlement; that, therefore, he should discontinue the allowance, preferring to lay it by, for his heir. Then he added something, about my husband's memory, and his having a greater claim on my constancy, or some such trash; all an excuse for his disgusting meanness!—nothing else!"

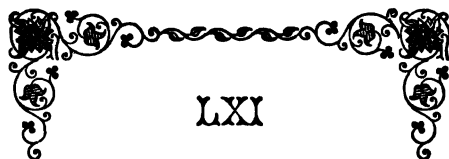
"Say no more, dearest mamma. You shall, in future, have your two hundred a year, independently of the caprice of any old tyrant."

(Mrs. Nubley thought within herself, "Another relation must die!")

"My sweet love! but for you, what would become of me? But really, I do not like to—"

"Mamma, don't say that! But for you, I should not have married as I have done!"

Her mother turned suddenly away.



MR. NUBLEY.

FOR her mother's sake, Helen intended to preserve an outward show of peace, with her father-in-law. It was not to be, however; for the old gentleman knew, instinctively, that she did not like him; and, not being aware that her coffers were opened, for the replenishment of his, and grudging, even the little presents, which he, how unjustly, heaven knows! deemed it possible Mrs. Nubley might wish to make her daughter, he looked upon their intercourse with a jealous and suspicious eye.

"No, no!" he thought; "I know what I *have*. It may not be much; but it is my own, and I will keep it! And now, that another of her relations is dying, I'm not going to let her waste her money, on that girl, who doesn't want it!"

But, while secretly disliking Helen, he treated her with much outward deference; for he considered, that, while visiting at Staniswood, he was saving house-keeping.

One day, however, Mrs. Nubley imprudently expressed her intention, of going to the town, to buy a pair of gloves.

"*More* gloves ma'am?" almost screamed her partner. "Why, your extravagance is enough to ruin one! What have you done with the pair you bought, just before you came here?"

Helen's blood boiled; but she tried to be calm. Her mother tremblingly replied,—

"Dearest Edwin, they are so dirty, that I am sure you would not like me to walk with you, in them."

"It's false ma'am—false! I like economy; and I consider, that, with moderate care, three pairs of gloves may be made to last the year;—that is, if you wear black ones, as *I* do ma'am!—and if *I* am not above wearing black ones, I don't see why the devil *you* should be!"

"By the same rule," observed Helen, apparently in jest, though, in reality she was in no jesting mood, "mamma ought to wear coats and hats!"

"If your money paid for your mother's clothing, you might have some right to offer an opinion, Mrs. Huntingdon," sharply retorted the enraged Edwin.

"I believe that mamma's own purse is, at all events, sufficiently well-stocked, to supply her with one, or twenty, pair of gloves," was Helen's quiet rejoinder.

"*Her* purse? She has none! When she married me, she added greatly to the expenses of my household, and—"

But Helen could stand it no longer. She interrupted, with,—

"Your household? I have always considered the cottage to be mamma's, and the servants too! But, excuse me—I do not wish for an altercation. I must, however, express my opinion, that you are treating mamma very unkindly—that your conduct towards her, is far from being that of a gentleman!"

She left the room. In five minutes, she had cooled down, and regretted having spoken her mind so freely. But it was then too late.—Mr. Nubley never forgave her.

"Mind," he said, to his trembling wife, "mind, that girl never enters *my* house!"

"Certainly not, love," faltered Mrs. Nubley, with her sweetest smile, though she inwardly loathed the being, to whom she was tied, "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness, and in health, to love, cherish, and obey, till death!"

The Nubleys left, soon after. Their departure was a relief to Helen, who could not bear to be a passive spectator of her mother's unhappiness. The parting with Marty, was, however, a great trial.

When they were gone, she sat down, to think mournfully of old times; and sad did it make her, to feel, that this

second husband was now desecrating the home, where her father's gentle presence had once cast its sunshine. But she had had so much grief, of one sort and another, that she thought it would be strange, if she had nothing to try her now; and she thanked God, that her worst trouble—*anxiety on her husband's account*—was at an end.

The winter passed away. Helen had been rather uneasy, about Mr. Wilson, who had had a sudden attack of illness; but he was now better, and was able to renew his correspondence with her. She also heard frequently, from Mrs. Howard, and from Grace Willingham; and their letters tended still further to aid the effect of her dear old friend's lessons.

It was a fine, cheery day in March—one of those days, when the brisk, light air, seems to produce a sort of understanding and sympathy, between us and nature, and to call us forth, to hold converse with her, beneath her own blue canopy.

Have you never remarked, that, just before any trouble, you feel peculiarly and unaccountably happy? At such times, the soul seems to have some mysterious presentiment, that the cup of happiness is about to be withdrawn from her lips; and, therefore, takes a deeper and more earnest draught of the sweet nectar, ere it vanishes.

Helen felt, this day, more completely happy, than she had felt for a long time.

"Have I not everything, to be thankful for?" she asked herself;—"my husband's love—kind friends—exemption from sickness and poverty!—Oh! it is a pleasant, pleasant world!"

She was strolling over the lawn, among the flower-beds; admiring the young plants that were struggling into existence; listening to the brisk chirping of the happy, busy, birds. She was waiting for Arthur to summon her; for they were going for a drive.

"Dear Arthur! how much he is improved! All his sadness is vanishing!" she thought; as he came running from the house to meet her, and cleared two or three flower-beds on the way, instead of going round them. "Ah, careless!" she cried, "you have knocked off the head of that rose-tree! Can't you walk like an ordinary mortal?"

At this moment, Brooks appeared.

"The carriage is ready. Shall we go?" he asked.

"*We?*"—Helen had not invited him; and his manner told her, that he was perfectly aware of that fact, but chose, apparently, to ignore it. She felt annoyed, remembering his former disagreeable *surveillance*. For months, he had not intruded his society. Was he now going to renew his persecution? All her joy vanished; and, though Arthur and his friend laughed and talked merrily, throughout the drive, she remained silent.

She felt, that the shadow was again darkening her path; and truly it was; for, day by day, did Brooks renew his former annoying assiduities; and, as before, all her coldness failed to daunt him. Again did her love for Arthur become chilled; as she saw, with contempt, his daily increasing terror of this man.

At last, Brooks professed his intention of visiting some of the watering-places on the coast; and proposed, that Helen and Arthur should go too. She refused; but, as Arthur expressed his determination to go, she at last consented to be of the party, and, with a heavy heart, left Staniswood. The day before her departure, Mrs. Huntingdon said to her,—

"Helen, I fear that Arthur's old habit is returning. He is fond of excitement, and, when no other presents itself, seeks it in that way. Do endeavour to keep him from it; and, above all, do not try to weaken Mr. Brooks's influence over him. Brooks is a very steady man—extremely sober. Arthur could not have a better companion."

Helen made no reply; she only kissed Mrs. Huntingdon, and said good night.

The next morning, they were off.



FLIGHT, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

It would be tedious to relate how, by degrees, Helen effected the object, on which, in leaving Staniswood, she had been resolutely bent. Arthur at last concurred fully in her opinion of their obnoxious attendant, and confessed, that he would give much, to be rid of him.

"We can do it Arthur, if we are but careful," said Helen.

"But, this time, don't let him read, in your looks, that we are about to leave him! Be more cordial towards him, than ever; and I have no doubt, that, before a week is over, we shall be able to give him the slip. Take courage, dear Arthur. I cannot bear to see you so miserably cowed. Whatever that man may know, it is cruel and inhuman, to oppress you thus!"

In her manner towards Brooks, Helen was most guarded. She treated him with the same quiet reserve as ever; and succeeded in duping him into the belief, that, though she inwardly rebelled against his intrusion, she knew that resistance would be useless. Therefore, in false security, he one night, after walking all day with Arthur, who was, consequently, quite exhausted, and had fallen asleep on the sofa, went off to bed, and soon slept. Then Helen stole quietly down stairs, and summoned the landlord.

"Business of importance calls us away immediately," she said. "We wish to get away, as quickly as possible, and without disturbing Mr. Brooks. I should like to settle with

you, while a carriage is being got ready to take us to the railway."

The bill was soon settled, the carriage was ready, and Brooks slept on, little dreaming, that the cage-door was open—the birds, escaped!

This time, Helen had planned their flight, better. She changed their route, many times, and at last crossed the Channel, for the Continent. There, she seemed to breathe freely; for she felt certain, that Brooks would never find the clue to their whereabouts.

She had, at first, thought of going quietly back to Staniswood; but then recurred to her, Mrs. Huntingdon's parting words, with reference to Brooks. Besides, she knew that he would naturally go there first, to seek them.

"No, no," she said to Arthur; "that would not do! I could not bear the sight of that man, much longer; it would drive me mad! Now, if we go abroad for a month or so, he will be tired out; and we can then return to Staniswood. Even if he find us there, we shall, at all events, have had a month's freedom—respite from his society."

Arthur, released from the constraint imposed by Brooks's presence, seemed a different being; he laughed, sang, and chatted, with even more than his usual spirits. At first, Helen rejoiced at the change; but, after a little while, she began to fear, that his spirits were, sometimes, rather too wild, and Mrs. Huntingdon's words recurred to her, in all their force. Whenever she beheld him raise a glass to his lips, she trembled, lest it should be the prelude to a scene of excitement. One day, she ventured to remove the decanter from before him; but he snatched it from her, saying,—

"You little fool! Do you think you are going to control me, as he did? Why, I dared not do this before him!"

And, seizing the decanter, he poured out a tumbler of wine, and swallowed the contents at a draught. Helen trembled; and her heart misgave her, that this had been neither the first, nor the second, libation, that day. Unable to endure the sight of her husband's degradation, she went to her own room. Before long, she heard the street-door bang loudly; and, descending to the sitting-room, found, that Arthur had left the house.

Oh! the misery of that night of terror and suspense—passed in regret, and tears, and agonised prayers! Towards morning, she sank into a perturbed sleep.

Awaking from a dream of horror, she found Arthur standing beside her.

"Arthur! Thank God! You have come back at last!"

He stared wildly at her.—"Where have I been? Have I been away?—walking in my sleep?"

"Oh, no, Arthur! You have been away; but you have not slept, this night! Don't you remember what happened?"

"No," he replied, passing his hand vacantly across his brow; "No. Oh Helen!" he exclaimed, with startling abruptness, "I have had such a horrible dream! I dreamt, that I left the house alone, and fled out into the darkness, with Brooks close at my heels. I cared not, where I went, so long as I could escape that blood-hound! I saw not, where I was going;—I fled on—on for my life! At last, I grew sick and faint—I heard, no longer, the sound of his heavy feet behind me—I sank down on the ground, and fell asleep. When I awoke, I was here!"

"Arthur, yours was no dream! You drank yourself into a state of delirium, and then left the house. See! how torn and travel-stained, is your dress!"

He gazed, in affright, upon his soiled and tattered clothes. He shuddered, and drew closer to his wife.

"Arthur, my dear husband," she solemnly began, "if you do not make me one promise, you will break my heart! Promise me—give me your solemn word—that you will, in future, refrain altogether from wine!"

She looked, imploringly, in his face. Again he gazed on her, in a bewildered manner.

"Promise!" she said; this time, in a tone of command, rather than of entreaty.

"Yes, yes—I promise!" he hurriedly rejoined, as if he were afraid of her.

For a moment, she felt a slight degree of comfort. Soon, however, she remembered, how he had broken his word, on the day of the races; and her heart again failed her.

After that day, Arthur drank no wine, in her presence; but, each day was she more and more distressed, by too evident

tokens, that his old vice was still indulged. His manner became sharp, abrupt,—almost brutal. Her gentle remonstrances at first met with derision, then, with insult. At last—a *blow* was given!

Now, the words of Brooks, and of Mrs. Huntingdon, flashed upon her, with a terrible meaning. She saw, that, in eluding the former, she had been paving the way to her own misery. Her love for Arthur, was fast yielding to a kind of shrinking terror and disgust.

Amidst her agony and disappointment, one thing was clear to her;—they must return to Staniswood. When, however, she suggested to Arthur, that the month, during which they had intended to be absent, had more than expired, and that she would be glad to be, either at Staniswood, or, in London, he turned sharply round, exclaiming,—

“Yes, you also, are turning against me!—turning spy and traitor! You will give me up, to that devil!”

“No, dear Arthur,” she tremblingly remonstrated. “*You* know, how little I like Mr. Brooks! But, *do* let us go back to Staniswood!”

“I tell you, I will not!—I will not!” he shouted, with blind fury.

For two more days, she bore with his violence; then, in terror for her life, she wrote to Mrs. Huntingdon, imploring her to come to her aid. She had, till now, kept her mother-in-law in ignorance of their place of refuge; having merely written her a few lines, on the eve of their departure for the continent, to say, that her husband and herself, no longer able to endure the impertinent intrusion of their tormentor, had decided on leaving him quietly; that she should, probably, not write for a month—not, until they were on the point of returning home. Helen wrote and despatched this letter during Arthur's absence. He used to be away, for hours at a time, after which, he would return, covered with dust, thoroughly exhausted, and half famished; he would eat ravenously, and would then fall into a heavy sleep, from which he would frequently waken, with a wild scream, exclaiming, that he was pursued; nor could Helen's soothing assurances, that he had been dreaming, always calm him.

But to-night, he seemed completely changed. He came in, tired as usual; but, instead of eagerly demanding food, he threw himself languidly on the couch. Helen glanced at his face, to read his temper; and saw, that he was plunged in the deepest sadness.

"Helen, love!"

She went to him. He laid his head against her arm.

"Why do you shrink from me? Have I been away too long? Are you angry? I lost my way, and thought I should never get back. Oh! how tired I am! How ill I feel!"

And, in truth, she was shocked by his ashy looks, and the deep hollows under his eyes.

"You are killing yourself, Arthur!"

"Oh, God! Oh, God! Why dost thou suffer me to live?" he sobbed forth. "I am wretched!—wretched!—wretched! Oh! to die—to die! Would that I were dead!"

"Poor Arthur!"

"Nay, rather, 'poor Helen!' I am breaking your heart, my poor wife! Oh! why is such a clod as I, suffered to cumber the earth?"

"Hush! Arthur, for pity's sake!"

"Oh! for death!—for death!" he groaned.

"Go to bed, Arthur. You are worn out!—sleep will restore you. Come, love."

Submitting, like a child, to her guidance, he suffered her to lead him away.

At last he fell asleep. For hours, she sat beside him. He had taken her hand, so that she could not stir without waking him; but her eyes were so heavy, that she could not keep them open. At last, resting her head upon the coverlet, she fell into an uneasy slumber. Before long, however, she was half roused, by Arthur's withdrawing his hand; and she had a sort of dim consciousness, that he was up, and moving. The noise caused by his opening a drawer, dispelled her remaining drowsiness. She awoke.

Arthur was at the other end of the room. His back was turned towards her; and he was busily occupied with something, that he had just taken out of the drawer. He turned slowly round, and walked to the window. As the moon's rays came streaming in upon him, she marked his ghastly

look; and then saw, with horror, that he held a pistol in his hand. She had no time to scream, or call for help. He raised the deadly weapon, pressing the muzzle against his brow. With a wild shriek, she sprang forward, as he pulled the trigger. It would have been too late to save him; but, instead of the report that she expected, there was only a snap.—The powder was damp; and the cap, alone, had exploded. “Oh! Thank God! Thank God!” she cried, clasping his knees convulsively, “Arthur! Arthur! don’t you know me? It is Helen—your own Helen!”

The moonbeams were still falling upon him. How ghastly they made him look!

“Come, Arthur, love, give me this!” she pleaded, gradually withdrawing the fatal weapon from his grasp; “and lie down to rest. Alas! alas! you must, indeed, have been wretched, ere you could have come to this!”

He suffered her to do with him as she chose. He lay down, but did not, for a long time, close his eyes. At last, however, she knew, by his quick breathing, that he slept.

No sleep—no drowsiness—weighed upon her brain, now! She felt, as if rest could never more be hers! She softly rose, re-possessioned herself of the instrument of death, and, opening the window, threw it out, far into the darkness. Then, falling on her knees, she thanked God that He had spared her husband the commission of so horrible a crime.

And there she sat, patiently awaiting the return of dawn; now and then stealing on tiptoe across the room, to gaze sorrowfully on Arthur’s poor, wan face; or, bending down, to hear whether he yet breathed; for he had sunk into so heavy a torpor, that her excited fancy almost pictured him, with his pale face, and motionless form, as lying there in the sleep of death.

At last, the grey, cold light, crept slowly up, behind the hills; a chilly feeling came floating along the air, and she knew that dawn was breaking. A little longer, and the birds began to chirp and twitter, and hop among the boughs; then, one by one, they flew away. A bright glow was spreading up into the sky; and, at last, the sun came surging up, in his pale glory. Day had come, at last.

She looked upon her husband’s white, care-worn face;

then, still more pale and care-worn, chilled by the cold morning-air, crushed to the heart by a sorrow such as she had never thought to see, she threw herself down by her husband's side, and sleep mercifully fell upon her senses.



RESCUE.

THERE are some days, when we seem to live through a lifetime of thought and experience. Such were the few days of Helen's life, after that fearful scene. Afraid to trust Arthur out of her sight, yet fearful of seeming to watch him, she suffered, in that short time, such an agony of dread, as she could never afterwards recall, without a shudder.

But, at last, she heard a voice on the stairs, the sound of which, she had once little thought could ever afford her pleasure. Mr. Brooks was asking for her! Arthur, too, heard the voice. At first, he started to his feet, as if in terror; then he re-seated himself, and, only holding Helen's arm a little more firmly than usual, fixed his eyes on the door.

Helen felt guilty; she glanced imploringly at the newcomer.

She need not have feared his betraying her to Arthur. He shook hands, as cordially, as though they had parted but the day before, and said,—

"I discovered where you were, through a friend of mine; and, being an idle man, and fond of travelling, thought I could not do better than join you—if you have no objection?" he added, appealing to Helen.

"On the contrary, we are delighted to see you," she replied, with more cordiality, than she had ever before manifested towards him.

"You left M—— very suddenly," he continued. "They

told me, that business of importance called you away. It was most kind and considerate of you, not to wake me, ~~to say~~ ^{to say} goodbye; but I do wish you had done so; I should have been so very happy, to make myself useful."

"You are very kind," Helen began; "but—"

"Oh! make no excuse. When do you think of returning to Staniswood?"

"It depends upon Arthur."

"Then, I advise him to return at once," said Brooks, glancing at the shrinking object of his words. "His mother is very ill, and will be glad of his company. What say you, Arthur?"

In reply, he muttered something, intended for an assent, but which was quite unintelligible. Brooks rang the bell; and ordered everything to be arranged for their departure, on the following morning. In a few minutes, Helen drew him aside, and whispered,—

"I have under-rated your services, and the value of your influence over him. I now acknowledge both; and I beseech you, whatever may be the secret of the mysterious power that you exercise over him, to use that power for his good,—gently, yet firmly.

"I will," he replied, in a trembling voice.

On the journey home, he seemed to pursue a different course with Arthur. He scarcely noticed him; devoting himself, almost exclusively, to Helen. And so, by degrees, Arthur's courage began to return; and he no longer cowered in the presence of the other.

Arrived at Staniswood, Helen looked anxiously for Mrs. Huntingdon's face; for she longed—yearned—for sympathy and kindness, from one of her own sex. But Mrs. Huntingdon did not appear; and her maid came, to announce, that her mistress was ill in bed, but would be glad to see her, if she would come up-stairs. Helen did so. On the way, she learnt, that Mrs. Huntingdon, who had for some weeks been suffering from low spirits, and nervous excitement, had, a few days before, received a letter, which had thrown her into a series of fits; and that she was now much exhausted. But, though Helen was prepared to find her much changed, she ~~was~~ ^{was} ~~met~~ ^{met} back, as her glance fell upon the once gay and handsome Mrs. Huntingdon.

There she lay,—weak—helpless; twenty years seemed to have been suddenly added to her age; and Helen saw, at once, that some of her limbs were powerless!

A faint gleam of pleasure shone upon the face of the invalid, as Helen advanced. She whispered to the latter, to dismiss the attendant. When the servant had left the room, she asked, in thick and somewhat imperfect tones,—

“Is Arthur better?”

“Yes—since Mr. Brooks joined us.”

“Why did you not write sooner, dear Helen?”

“I hoped, to the last.”

“Poor child! My poor Helen!—And, do you still hope?”

Helen bowed her head, and wept.

“My child,” continued the other, in solemn accents, “thank God, that self-reproach is not added to your torments!—that you have not made another wretched, for your sake!”

Helen’s conscience smote her. She replied in deep sadness,—

“You do not mean to reproach me;—but you cannot think, how your words pain me!”

“Poor child! you were more sinned against, than sinning! Helen, dearest, when I sought you, for Arthur, I did not love you! I do now; and I would give my heart’s blood, if I could dissolve the union, which has consigned you to a life-time of misery!”

“Nay,” said Helen, very gently, yet, with firmness; “none can be *utterly* miserable, who feel, that their trials are sent to them by One, who ‘does not *willingly* grieve nor afflict the children of men;’ and I have had, even in my deepest affliction, rays of comfort, such as, in my more prosperous years, I did not know!”

A holy calm irradiated the sad young brow. The listener gazed in wonder; and then, sighing heavily, rejoined,—

“Child! child! you are young, to have learnt such a lesson! I am old, and worn-out, and have yet to learn it! Alas! alas! my heart is hard, and closed against such teaching! I can never learn that lesson, now!”

Not so, thought Helen; and from that day, she sought to guide her weary fellow-traveller, into the same narrow path,

which, though it had, at first, appeared to her, rough and uninviting, had, at the last, proved so smooth and pleasant.

And now, began the punishment of the hitherto successful worldling. Rendered, by her affliction, utterly helpless, and dependent upon others for even the most trifling services, the love with which she had begun to regard the young and simple girl, deepened into a sort of adoration, for the fragile creature, who, night and day, regardless of fatigue, tended her, with the most unwearying and anxious solicitude. Her state was so precarious, that Helen had a couch brought into the sick room, in order that the poor invalid might not miss her in the night.



THE THUNDER-STORM.

It was the eighth night, after their return to Staniswood ;—a hot, oppressive night. Heavy thunder-clouds had been impending, all the evening ; and, as the sun went down amidst a mass of black and red, a lurid glare, that was not reflected from him, pervaded the arch of heaven. The air seemed full of the electric fluid ; and the poor invalid moaned feebly, and complained, that her head ached to distraction. Helen suffered from the same cause—that intense, excruciating headache, which often precedes a thunder-storm ;—(happy are they who know it not !)—and, as she bade Arthur good-night, she knew, by his intense pallor, that he, too, though he made no complaint, was suffering from the overcharged state of the atmosphere.

All was presently quiet ; and the darkness grew blacker and blacker. The heat was so oppressive, that she threw open the window, for air—if that could be called air, which was like the sullen heat of a furnace ;—and there she continued to sit, the door also being open.

At length, a faint rumbling in the distance, seemed to herald the coming storm. A few minutes ; and the thunder began to growl nearer. Then came a flash, livid and forked, as though some mighty serpent in the sky, had, for a moment, darted out his tongue of flame, to lick the earth ; and after that, a clap. Helen retreated from the window ; and moved to the door, for air.

Now, the storm came nearer and nearer, till, at last, it burst forth, in awful fury ; the thunder, crashing and tearing,

as though it would rend the very universe; and the lightning, darting here and there, in jagged flames. Then, there was a lull.

"The storm is ceasing," said Helen.

She had scarcely spoken, when there came a blinding glare,—above, around, everywhere;—while forked tongues of flame, and balls of fire, darted about, in mad revelry; and, at the same time, a splitting, deafening roar, like the discharge of ten thousand pieces of artillery, burst from overhead. Helen shrank from the fearful sight. She turned away her head.

Ha! What did she see?—What crouching thing was that, stealing along, past the open door?—a creature, with the figure of a man—the face of a demon!

Was that her husband?—that goblin-looking thing—seen so dimly, yet with such horrible distinctness, in the blue light!

By an involuntary impulse, she followed.

He went but a few steps, and stopped before the door of Brooks's room. He entered it. She stood in the door-way, paralysed with terror—rooted to the spot!

A lamp burned on the table; by its light, she saw that Brooks slept. *He* advanced—still crouching along, like a beast of prey, preparing for a spring. When close beside the sleeper, he sprang, noiselessly, to his full height, and, with a gleam of devilish exultation lighting up his white face, drew from beneath his arm, something, that glittered in the light—a long, sharp knife!

A piercing scream from Helen, caused the assailant to start backwards, in terror; while, at the same time, Brooks sprang to his feet, wrested the knife from his foe, with powerful arm felled him to the ground, and stood panting over him.

"Great Heaven!" shrieked Helen, falling on her knees, "what—what can it mean?"

"'Mean?'" echoed Brooks, in deep, slow tones, "'Mean?'"
—That your husband is——"

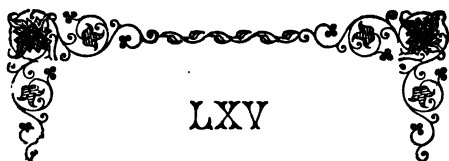
"What? What?" she screamed.

"The truth can no longer be kept from you——"

"No—no—Tell me!"

He paused, for one instant. Then, he spoke—

"Your husband is—a *madman*!"



BROOKS'S NARRATIVE.

ALL was hushed, in the darkened room ; where death, and desolation, were at work. Death, hovering, with uplifted lance, over the prostrate form of the plotting worldling ;—desolation, reigning supreme, in the heart of her victim !

Helpless—paralysed—the wretched mother lay on her death-couch.

Quailing—bending—with a dead weight of grief and horror, pressing heavily upon her senses, the young wife knelt beside her.

Faintly, and confusedly, came the dying words, from a tongue, that had almost lost the power of utterance ; the accents, how strangely—fearfully—altered, from the silvery tones, that had once rung so musically from her lips.

“Then, you knew it—years, years ago—before you ever met me, or heard, that I existed ?—You knew, that this must be the fate of her, who married your son ?”

The lips moved rigidly, and jerked forth the words,—

“But I hoped——”

“You hoped that she *might* escape ?—Yet, you were willing she should run the risk ! I see it all. Not liking that the estate should pass out of the family, you determined that your son should have an heir ; therefore, you wished to marry him, before his horrid malady should break forth. But, why choose *me*, of all persons ? Was there no *other*, of whom you could have made a victim ?”

The pale lips moved ; but no sound issued from them.

"Probably, you imagined, that, knowing nothing of your antecedents, *I* should the more readily fall into the snare?"

With a violent effort, the dying woman articulated,—

"I must not tell!"

That night, and the next day, passed. Mrs. Huntingdon was evidently sinking rapidly. All Helen's resentment had yielded to pity; and she bent over the helpless form, with a feeling of desolation, at the thought of losing her.

Night had set in; and Helen was listening for the return of Brooks, who had taken Arthur away. At length, he came.

Though the doctor tried to prevent him, he at once stepped to the bedside of the dying woman, and asked, in distinct and emphatic tones,—

"Am I to tell her, *all*?"

The mouth seemed fast clenched; but at length, with a convulsive effort, the lips unlocked, and pronounced, though with difficulty, and in thick, muffled tones, the words,—

"Yes;—except——"

Brooks quietly turned away; and led Helen from the room.

"You can do her no good!" he said, in accents of pitying tenderness. "She is fast losing consciousness. If she wish to see you, they will let you know."

Mechanically, she followed him to the sitting-room.

'Shall I unravel the mystery, connected with this tale of wretchedness?'

She quietly assented; and, throwing her arms helplessly on the table before her, bowed her head upon them. She felt too desolate for tears. Her heart ached intolerably, and seemed turning to stone. She prayed that she might die.

He began his story.

"It is not necessary, that I should give you an account of my early life. Suffice it to say, my youth was passed in riot and dissipation. At twenty-five, I had spent the last farthing of a noble inheritance, and found myself cast, alone, and friendless, on the world. Yes, friendless; for they who had been ready enough to befriend me in my prosperity, shrank from me, when they beheld the ruin which they themselves had helped to accelerate. But, I had *one* friend—Arthur Huntingdon, your husband's father. His friendship for me, was based on a foundation, that could not be shaken by the

vicissitudes of fortune. He had confided to me, and to me alone, the terrible fact, that insanity was hereditary in his family! He had implored me to guard him,—to watch for any symptom, that might betoken the approach of the dreaded curse; and to avert from his young wife, any danger that might threaten her, by removing him, when he was beyond control, to a safe asylum.

“Whether madness really was in his veins, or whether the tortures of dread which he must for years have experienced, brought on the very calamity he feared, it is impossible to say; but, two years after his marriage, I noticed a change come over him. Alas! how I have lately seemed to live again through all that portion of my life. Like you, Mrs. Huntingdon resented my influence over her husband, and vainly tried to banish me from her presence;—me, her only guardian! But at last, her husband’s dormant madness burst forth in terrible fury. Then, I revealed to her the awful truth; and poor Huntingdon was conveyed to the same asylum, whither I have now taken his unfortunate son. There, he died.

“In parting with Mrs. Huntingdon, I cautioned her to be strictly on her guard, lest she should afford poor Arthur the slightest clue, as to his fatal inheritance. He was then only five years of age—a fine, handsome little fellow. Carefully as I had watched him, I had not detected the slightest evidence of a tendency to insanity; and I hoped, that his mother’s, rather than his father’s, blood flowed in his veins. It is true that he was a nervous, excitable child, and possessed a highly wrought imagination, which I trembled to behold; for, *in case* he should ever have any great cause for excitement, or agitation, that imagination might, I thought, become uncontrollable. Still, as I have said, I saw no grounds for alarm; and I parted from Mrs. Huntingdon without apprehension, merely cautioning her, to avoid, as much as possible, all excitement, for Arthur, and to guard, most carefully, the dreaded secret. ‘If,’ I said, ‘you see anything to alarm you, send for me. I have studied his father’s symptoms, and shall be able to advise you.’

“Years passed by;—years, of fierce battling with the stern realities of life—with poverty—starvation—despair. I

met, and loved.—But, let that pass—I must not dwell upon *that* theme! My tears would flow like a child's!—Well, we were young and unthinking; and we married. It had been a hard struggle, to find bread for myself.—How then, could I hope to succeed, when *two* had to be fed and clothed? She bore it bravely; but at last, overcome by privations, to which she was unaccustomed, she sank under them. Poverty and disappointment did their work.—She died!

“But for our little one—so like her—I could not have borne the slow torture of existence; but, for her sake, I struggled on yet. My daughter reconciled me to life; yet, when I looked forward to the future, that life seemed insupportable. My child was growing up to womanhood; and I had no means of giving her more than the merest rudiments of education. I saw her, coarsely fed—meanly clad;—her, whom I would have placed upon a shrine, for the world to worship! And when I reflected, on the chance of my death, I shuddered, at the thought of my darling's struggle with the cold, hard world. I was wretched.

“Thus things were, when a strange letter was one day placed in my hands. I had forgotten the hand-writing; but, glancing at the signature, saw that it was, ‘Huntingdon.’ It was, indeed, from my poor friend's wife; who begged me, most earnestly, to come to her, as she wished me to observe Arthur carefully for a few days, and then to give her the benefit of my opinion as to his state. She said, that he had occasionally alarmed her, by his wild fits of excitement, alternated by those of extreme depression. She added, that she had further intelligence to communicate; but, that she would reserve it, until we met.

“I went to her; and then learnt the fact of your engagement. Instantly, I implored her to break it off; but there, she was inflexible. I wavered, resolved to watch Arthur. Alas! I noticed precisely the same symptoms, that had appeared in his poor father's case! I said to her, ‘Your son is, even now, *mad*, at times! His malady may not, it is true, make further progress; but the chances are, that it *will*! It were a sin—a horrible, deadly sin—to perpetuate this family curse. The name of Huntingdon, and their miserable doom, must die out, with this generation!’

"'It cannot be! It is too late!' she replied. 'And if I had thought that you would have opposed Arthur's settlement in life, I would never have consulted you. Why, it is his only chance! I tell you, that, to part from her now, would be his ruin. Nothing could then save him!' 'And I tell you,' I retorted, somewhat angrily, 'that this marriage must not—shall not—take place! Arthur has no *right*, to—' 'Hush!' she interrupted; for she thought she heard a noise. How guilty she looked! 'Yes,' I continued; 'well may you tremble! Your conscience tells you, *what* a deed you are contemplating!'

"Well, I continued to urge her, for several days; but without effect. At last, one night, my temper gave way. I left her, in anger; and, the following morning, I quitted the house.

"Now, mark what followed! Arthur and you had compared notes, as to the fact of the close understanding that seemed to exist between Mrs. Huntingdon and myself. (Mrs. Huntingdon has since related to me, this part of the story). Arthur had been making inquiries, as to my whereabouts, of Halkin, whose suspicions becoming aroused, he listened, every night, at the door, while Mrs. Huntingdon and I, thinking the whole house slept, discussed the fatal secret.

"Mrs. Huntingdon, terrified at my sudden departure, and not knowing what it might forbode, wrote to me, to entreat that I would take no steps to prevent the marriage, or, in short, do anything, that might lead to Arthur's discovery of his misfortune; and she promised, that she would, in her turn, gradually break off the engagement. She professed to be convinced by my arguments, and to be touched with pity for your youth and helplessness.

"I wrote in reply. That letter of mine was intercepted by Halkin!

"Now comes the worst part.—Elated with the knowledge of this secret, and conscious of the power it gave him over his master—desirous also of profiting by it,—his manner became insolent in the extreme; till Arthur, goaded beyond endurance, violently, and with abusive language, ejected him from his presence. In revenge, the fellow divulged the horrid truth, and produced my letter, in corroboration of his words.

If any lingering doubt, or hope, remained in his heart, after reading that letter, it was dispelled, the following morning, in an interview with his mother. Still, his passionate love for you, aided by her specious arguments, stood between him and the performance of his duty. He did not give you up.

"But for his fatal discovery, he might have escaped the hereditary curse; but, alas! from that night, he was a changed man! The thought, of what he might become—of the misery to which you might be doomed,—never left him, for a moment; and preyed upon his mind, till reason sank, under the heavy weight. You attributed his terrible fits of excitement, to intemperance; and Mrs Huntingdon encouraged the idea,—partly, from a wish to spare you the misery that a knowledge of the truth would occasion you,—partly from dread, lest your abrupt departure from your husband, should precipitate the calamity, she so wished to avert. I fear, that poor Arthur sought distraction, in excitement—yes, at times, even the excitement of drink! Poor fellow! if so, he but accelerated the progress of his disorder.

"Well, his insanity fairly broke out, at last. You remember the race, (as if you could ever forget it!) After that, he was *raving mad*—though you thought it, only the delirium of illness. They feared, that you would discover the truth; and, therefore, kept you from him, till he was convalescent. Then, they sent for me.

"While I was with him, I endeavoured to keep him free from undue excitement, whether mental or physical. My presence, too, imposed a restraint upon him; for he knew well, that I stood to him in the relation of—a *keeper*!"

"But," interrupted Helen, "how could you abandon your child, to enter upon such duties!"

"For my child's sake, I did it. I beheld her, young, portionless, helpless. The remuneration offered to me by Mrs. Huntingdon, tempted me to undertake the care of her son. I reflected, that, by accepting so fearful a trust, I should acquire the means of educating my daughter in such a manner, as to qualify her for supporting herself, in case of my sudden death. This thought nerved me to bear all the sorrow and anxiety, that I had to go through. How my heart ached for you, poor child! How I sometimes longed

to warn you,—to assure you of my sympathy! Alas! I could but watch over you, and act for the best. I could but hope, that your husband's fearful malady might have a change."

"Forgive me! forgive me!" sobbed Helen. "I see that you wished to be my friend, and I would not let you! I know all the rest;—all your horror and anxiety, when we eluded your watchful care;—your joy, when my letter to Mrs. Huntingdon again set you upon our track;—your renewed vigilance, when Arthur was once more under this roof! Thank God!—thank God! that I saw him, that night, and that my shriek of terror, saved you! Oh! what fearful peril was mine, before you came to guard him!—and his, too, poor fellow! How I remember the anxiety he caused me, in town; his wild excitement, confusion of memory, and terrible depression! Were those, but preliminary symptoms?" she asked, with a shudder.

"They were; and the stimulants which he took to drown reflection, hastened the progress of his disease."

"And that fearful race! Never shall I forget, how wild he looked, as he dashed past us—scarcely human!"

"As soon as I joined you, I at once saw, that there was serious cause for alarm. At times, he was as sane, as you, or I; then, again, I could tell, by indubitable symptoms, that it was dangerous, to trust him out of my sight. When these symptoms became very strong, it was no longer safe, to leave him for one moment; I, therefore, took him away, and then he never left me, day or night. Nothing seemed so beneficial to him, as frequent change of scene; therefore, I hurried him from place to place. You know how much he was improved, on his return after our long absence. I knew, well enough, when he might safely be trusted with you, and I then refrained from inflicting my society; but, when I saw his dangerous mood returning, I never left him with you. Do you remember the long walks I used to make him take? I did it, in order to fatigue him so thoroughly, that he should sleep heavily, during the night, and thus, be out of mischief."

They were both silent. Then he resumed, in sad and altered tones,—

"And that poor dying woman!—If you knew how her

conscience has reproached her, for her share in your misery, you would forgive her!"

"I do! I do!"

"I have seen her—since she has learnt to love you—plunged in the deepest affliction on your account. 'Oh!' she has said to me, 'if I had known her—loved her—as I do now, I could not have done it!—no, not for a hundred sons—a hundred fortunes! But her own mother knew all, and yet, did not hesitate, to sacrifice her!'"

Helen trembled, and looked up wonderingly. Brooks continued;—

"I did not understand her; and asked, what she meant. She replied, that Grace Willingham had told her all, and had appealed to her, to prevent the marriage. Mrs. Grey had treated her application with contempt, saying, that, though there might be madness in the family, it was a hundred chances to one, that Arthur escaped, and declaring, that she had made up her mind, her daughter should marry him."

Helen groaned. Brooks resumed.—

"'I had almost wavered,' Mrs. Huntingdon said, 'at sight of the poor child's youth and helplessness; but, when her own mother did not hesitate to sacrifice her, I hardened myself against better impulses. I have never, never ceased to repent that deed of iniquity!' Poor woman! she is going before a Higher Tribunal than ours! Let us not judge her!"

"No, no!" sobbed Helen. "I forgive her!—She has been more merciful to me, than my *own* mother!"

"Try to take some rest now, poor girl!"

He supported her tottering steps, to the door of her own room. She entered it; then, she turned back again, to say,—

"Forgive all my injustice! I have never known my true friends—would to God I had! Bless you! God bless you! May your goodness to me, be rewarded tenfold, in blessings on your child!"

His face brightened. "Nay—I trust her lot is secured. She is about to be happily married."



LXVI

KIND FRIENDS.

LETTER, from Helen, to Marty.

"Marty—Marty—come to me! for I think I shall go mad! I long, so, to have some one near, that loves me! There is nothing before me, but misery!—nothing!—nothing! Oh, Marty! you have never failed me! Come to me, now!"

Such was the letter, that Marty placed in Mrs. Howard's hands, saying,—

"And please, mum, how am I to get there soonest?—And please, mum (if I don't make too bold),—if—if you'd only forgive and forget, and ——"

She hesitated; but her imploring glance spoke the words that her lips did not utter.

"And go to her, Marty? Yes. Tell Robert to bring the carriage directly—*directly*!—We will start, by the next train!"

Mrs. Howard spoke in unusual agitation. Marty flew to obey her orders. John paced quickly to and fro, in the room.

The carriage was soon at the door; Mrs. Howard and Marty were in it. John hesitated one moment; then, he joined them.

As he stood on the platform, waiting till the train should move off, his mother gazed anxiously in his face. But he did not speak; he only held her hand, nervously, and his eyes were cast down.

"Have you no message for her, John?"

"No. But, be kind to her, mother! Remember, how young she was—how misled!"

"Do not fear, John.—I have never ceased to love her."

There was a puff from the engine—a jolting—a jarring sound. The train was in motion.

John started from a reverie.—"Mother, tell her—"

"What, my dear?"

"No, nothing," he said, relinquishing her hand, and stepping backwards.

The train was off.

"I was not weak!" he thought. "I remembered, in time! But I nearly gave way—I almost forgot myself! She has brought it upon her own head! No doubt, it is but the old story; a libertine husband—a disappointed, broken-hearted wife! Well, she has sought her fate;—let her enjoy it!"

And he walked moodily away.

On whirled the train; but its pace seemed slow, to the anxious and excited feelings of many in it—of none, more than of Mrs. Howard and Marty. The former was lost in vain conjecture, as to what could have happened, to make Helen write so despairingly. Then, why had she written to Marty, instead of to her mother, to come to her? As for Marty, she had but one thought.—Her darling was wretched; and the marriage, which she had vainly tried to avert, and had since as vainly tried to hope would turn out well, had wrecked her child's happiness, for ever. For hours, the honest creature wept inconsolably; but, after a while, her tears flowed more calmly; and then, for the first time, she remembered, that she had left Brockley, without asking Mrs. Nubley's permission.

"Well!" she thought, "it's all one, to me, whether she's angry, or not; and if that there Nubley gives me any of his chaff, I can pay him back, and it'll be a comfort to me! But missis won't be angry with me, for going to my precious,—though I don't know as she cares much about her, neither!"

Not long after, they approached Staniswood.

"Why, Marty," exclaimed Mrs. Howard, "all the blinds are down! What can it mean?"

"Oh! not my darling! not my precious lamb! *She ain't dead?*" Marty almost screamed.

"No, Marty—her husband, more likely! Perhaps, that was the cause of her note."

"I should bless the day!" cried poor Marty, with streaming eyes.

"Hush! hush! my dear Marty," remonstrated Mrs. Howard; while her conscience smote her, as she called to mind, how her own heart had often indulged a hope, which her lips had not shaped into words.

The carriage stopped, before the door.

"Is Mrs. Arthur well?" screamed Marty, almost before the door was open.

"Better than she has been; but Mrs. Huntingdon's death has tried her, sadly," was the answer.

Marty, knowing the house, took the lead. Mrs. Howard followed her, to Helen's bed-room. They entered, so softly, as not to wake Helen; who, almost crushed beneath her heavy load of grief, had at last fallen into a heavy slumber.

Mrs. Howard gazed silently on the sleeper; and, if any bitter memory of the past, had, unknown to her, still lingered in her mother's heart, it died away, in that long gaze of hers.

The form, which had once been moulded in such perfect symmetry, had become thin, and angular. The face, that had once glowed with the rich tints of youth and happiness, was of marble whiteness. Lines were drawn upon the once smooth brow—lines, of grief and care. One hand had been raised, to push back from the heated brow, the heavy tresses of glossy hair; and that hand and arm were so thin and white!—they looked as if a touch would crush them! There was an excess of misery and dejection, in the face of the sleeper, that smote keenly upon the hearts of the watchers. Their eyes met. Marty hastily turned away, and tried to stifle her sobs.

Still Helen slept; but in about half-an-hour she awoke, and half started from her couch. Mrs. Howard passed her arms round her. There was a wild scream of, "You here?—You!—Oh! how good! how good!" and she clung, passionately, to her friend.

"And, Marty?" she asked, in a tone of disappointment. "Couldn't she come? Wouldn't they let her come to me?"

"My own! My darling!" sobbed Marty, almost hysterically. "As if I would have let them keep me from you!"

"It is too much happiness!—too much!"

She leant back, and turned very pale.

"Keep quiet, my darling," said Mrs. Howard, bending on her, a glance, full of pitying love; "keep quiet, now, dear Helen. You must have suffered terribly! You shall tell me all about it, some day; but try to forget it, now."

But Helen could not forget all the horror and misery that had ended in a manner so fearful;—could not forget, that her husband was a furious madman, chained, and guarded, as though he were a wild beast! As she gradually unfolded to her good friends the wretchedness of her past life, their minds reverted to the selfish, worldly mother, who had been the cause of it.

"Helen, dear," asked Mrs. Howard, "would you like to see your mother? Shall I write to her?"

"No, no!" she replied, with a shudder. "I could not bear to see her!"

"And no wonder, neither, my lamb!" cried Marty, with her usual impetuosity. "She's bin no mother to you! Why, she knowed this—she did! *That's* what Miss Grace was a tellin' her of, that there day, when I was a waitin' to dress missis! And, now I know it, if I ever set foot in her house again—my name's not Marty!"

"Hush! Marty dear," pleaded Helen, in a soft, gentle voice. "*I* have forgiven her;—so must you! She did not know all the misery she was bringing upon me!"

But Marty had no notion of forgiving so easily.

"And to think," she persisted, "how happy you might have bin, if you'd married Mr. John! And you *would* have done it, if you'd bin left to yourself!—yes, that you would—even at the very last! Don't tell me! I know'd it all along. Even the night before your weddin'—when you was talkin' to me, and missis stopped us—you loved Mr. John dearly—better than Mr. Arthur! But she *sold* you, my dear, for gold, that can't make us happy, and often brings us sore trouble!"

"No, Marty, I was to blame—I alone! I broke my promise—behaved treacherously—dishonorably! and all that I have since suffered, has been less than I have deserved! Oh! Mrs. Howard—dear Mrs. Howard!—"

She did not finish her sentence ; but the beseeching glance, spoke volumes.

"Yes, my dear child, I have forgiven you ! I love you, as dearly as ever—though you cannot be my daughter, as I once fondly hoped, you would be."

"And he?"

"Forgives you, I trust—I am sure."

"Is he happy?" her lips moved nervously—"Has he found one, to supply my place?—one, as true, as I was false?"

Her sobs were so convulsive, that Mrs. Howard became almost alarmed.

"Hush! love. Try to calm yourself. Remember, that all afflictions work for our good, if we only take them in the right spirit! Perhaps, this trial was necessary for him."

"Oh, no! He was so good—so noble—so upright!—How unlike me!"

"But Helen, he had that terrible failing, (to call it by no harsher word,) *pride*! and without humility, we cannot serve God as we ought!"

Helen remained silent, pondering her friend's words. At last, she replied,—

"It may be so ; but *I* cannot see his faults. I know, however, that *I* stood in need of affliction, to lead my rebellious heart to Him, whom, in my prosperous days, I never loved—never worshipped. None, but very sharp trials, would have won me from the world. I was, in truth, a worshipper of Mammon! Like those pilgrims in the old picture-book, I turned my back upon the happy valley, and, with bowed head, and eyes fixed upon the ground, toiled painfully up the stony ascent, with my heavy burden of gold!"

"Your words, dear Helen, are proving the truth of mine. Never before, have I heard you talk thus! Your trials have, indeed, been blessings to you!"

"I know it," said Helen, though in faltering accents ; "I know that they are sent in mercy ; and, if I cannot yet feel quite grateful for them, nor thank God from my very heart, I shall do so one day—I know I shall!"

Her thin white hands were clasped together, and her sad eyes were raised earnestly to Heaven.



JOHN'S REVENGE.

JOHN did not wait for the letters, that morning; he went for them. With feverish impatience, he grasped the one in his mother's hand-writing, and, tearing it open, read it, as he walked home.

"I have so much to tell you, my dear, and so little time to tell it in, that I hardly know how to begin.

"No wonder poor Helen wrote in such despair. Her husband is the inmate of a lunatic asylum! Mrs. Huntingdon is dead—a victim to paralysis. We found poor Helen, alone here, without a single creature to breathe a word of comfort to her. She seemed—poor dear child!—almost broken-hearted. I shall try to get her away from here, as soon as possible. I would bring her back with me, if I thought her presence would not distress you, my dear. She seems to shrink, in horror, from the thought of visiting her mother. I hardly know what to do; for I dare not leave her here alone. I will write to you again, soon; but, at present, Helen requires all my attention. "Your affectionate Mother."

To this letter, John returned the following reply:—

"Bring her here, by all means, my dearest mother. This is no time, for resentment! Come, as soon as you like."

That day week, John was bustling about, in great excitement, inspecting, and giving the last finishing touches to, Lucy's old room, which was now to be devoted to Helen. His sister watched, with dim eyes, and a sad smile, her brother's quick movements. Not the most gentle woman,

could have shewn more anxiety for the comfort of the expected guest, than he did.

"What a beautiful vase, ohn! Where *did* you buy it?"

"At Hapsley. It is for flow rs.—She was fond of flowers!"

"And these pictures, John—what lovely faces and scenes!"

"Yes, she used to say, that she like to have everything pretty, around her."

"I declare, there is a new carpet—and new curtains!"

"Yes, can't you remember, what a fastidious eye she had? She could not bear to see anything out of harmony."

Lucy sighed.

"Well, John, there is nothing here, that will not gratify her. You have made this room, perfect!"

"You think so?" he asked, rather nervously. "You think it will not look mean, after the splendor of Staniswood, and her London house?"

"*Think?* I am sure it will not! But, I must go home now; so, good-bye."

"Come in, to-morrow afternoon,—you may think of something she will want," pleaded John. "I expect them to arrive in the evening;—perhaps it would please her, if you and Tom were here to meet her—"

"We will come—" Lucy began. He interrupted,—

"And yet, no. I daresay she will be too tired. We must not kill her with kindness!"

"Very well; I will come next morning," replied Lucy. And she walked away.

"After what has passed," thought John, "I would not, on any account, seem wanting in hospitality."

How easy it is, to deceive ourselves! Lucy was not deceived, however; and as she turned away, she sighed, to see how much of the old feeling lingered yet in her brother's heart.

But, as the time approached when he was to meet Helen, some of his pride returned—some of his bitter feelings. "I will be courteous to her, and nothing more!" he determined. And he sat listening for the sound of the carriage wheels, and summoning all his worst feelings, to the support of what he fancied to be his dignity. Little did he know, of the trembling heart, that beat quicker and quicker, every moment that it approached nearer to the presence of one, it had

wronged. Little did he know, how the proud spirit was quelled and broken—how the conscience was seared! As little did he dream of this, as of the faded beauty of the once brilliant creature, whose falsehood had cast its blighting influence over the sunshine of his days!

He heard the carriage-wheels grating quickly along the sandy road. He drew a long breath, and, with every appearance of composure, stepped forth to welcome the newcomers.

He had expected to behold the Helen of his dreams, whom he had thought of—dreamt of—prayed for—suffered for—loved—hated—as no other.—His eyes rested on a pale, faded woman,—grief-worn—humble! He forgot his lofty resolutions; springing forward, he tenderly lifted her from the carriage, supported her into the house, and gently laid her on the sofa.

“My dear Helen! My poor, poor child!”

Such were the words, uttered tremblingly, (and he turned away for a moment, and hastily brushed his hand across his eyes) that replaced the studied, “My dear Mrs. Huntingdon, I cannot tell you how pleased I am to see you!” which he had meant to say.

“She is indeed, sadly changed,” sighed his mother. “But I hope the Brockley air will do wonders for her.—Eh, Helen, dear?”

Helen looked, from John to his mother, and then back again to him, and, faintly articulating, “I don’t deserve it!” burst into tears.

How sadly plaintive were the tones of that voice, which he had only pictured to himself, as ringing in careless merriment—musical, yet heartless! How the deep pathos of the few humble words found their way to his heart!

As she complied with Mrs. Howard’s advice, to go to bed early, she held out her hand to John.

“Good-night John.”

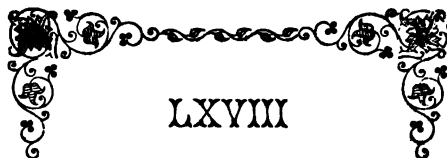
Her voice was so soft and pleading—it seemed to say “Can you forgive me?”—that he took the little hand, and tenderly, reverently, pressed it between his own.

“Good-night, dear Helen.”

But, alone again, his pride began to return.

"I have been weak! Of course, no woman could have gone through such trials, without being shaken by them. Trouble has humbled her for a time; but, let her regain her health—let her husband be restored to reason—and they will both laugh at the weak fool, who—no, *she* would not do that! Well! I should have been a brute, if I had treated her coldly, to-night; but there shall be no *more* weakness! She shall see that I am not to be made a fool of, *twice*! No, even were she free, her hand might vainly be offered to me!"

Thus thinking, he fell asleep.



MARTY GIVES WARNING!

WHEN Helen met John, the next morning, she felt chilled by his altered manner. After coldly shaking hands, and expressing his hope that she had slept well, he waited till she was engaged in conversation with his mother, and then, taking up a book, went with it to his own room. Helen sighed, but thought,—

“If One, who ~~was~~ sinless, bore His Cross without a murmur, shall I, who have deserved it, complain?”

Presently, Lucy came in; and her manner, even more gently affectionate than of old, touched Helen so deeply, that she could hardly speak.

“You don’t look well enough to-day, Helen dear—but I do so want you to come and see our house! And I have so much to tell you! And I am so happy!”—She paused. “Forgive me dear.—I ought not to talk of my happiness, while you——”

“Yes, Lucy,” Helen quietly interrupted, “it does me good, to hear it. I have had so much sorrow lately, that sunshine seems to have left the world!” And she smiled faintly.

“Ah! here is John!” exclaimed Lucy, as her brother entered the room. “Now, Helen, scold him for all the trouble he has bestowed on the adornment of your room! You don’t know the fuss he made about it!”

“Nonsense!” said John, very impatiently. “Miss Harwood is coming to visit us, some time or other;—I thought it only one trouble, to furnish the room for Mrs. Huntingdon and her.”

Helen had turned a tearful glance towards him—a grateful penitent glance. His manner, even more than his words, wounded her. She could not speak; but she thought, “I have deserved it!”

“Oh!” persisted Lucy, “it is all very well, for you to pretend that!—but you don’t care a straw, for Emma’s tastes! Didn’t you tell me, that you had had that beautiful vase placed on the table, because Helen liked flowers; and the pictures, and the curtains, and——”

Lucy stopped; for John’s brow was black as night. He sternly addressed her.—

“I hate this folly!—so unlike *you*! For heaven’s sake, do not indulge in levity of speech!—it borders, too closely, on levity of heart!”

If Helen had entertained any doubt, as to whether his unkind words were aimed at her, his keen glance at her, ere he left the room, assured her, that it was so. But still, her conscience whispered, “I have deserved it all!”

From the constraint, which this incident had thrown over them, they were aroused, by the abrupt entrance of Marty, who was evidently in the greatest excitement. Her eyes sparkled, over her glowing cheeks; and at first, she could not speak intelligibly.

“What is it, Marty dear? What is the matter?” asked Helen, in a soothing voice.

“Didn’t I write from Staniswood, to tell her, how it was I took myself off so sudden? Didn’t I tell her, it was to see you?—my precious—my darling! Well, I thought, bad as she was, and little as she cared for you, she’d be glad I went to you, in your trouble, my own! So, I went straight there, last night; and, says I, ‘I’m come back, mum.’ I thought she’d begin to ask me all about you; but, she didn’t—she said never a word. Then that there Nubley outs with,—‘How dare you come back, at all; you impudent cretur?’ says he. ‘How do we know, where you’ve bin?’ says he again. So I stares at him; for I felt struck all of a heap, to think that the cretur should go for to speak like that, to *me*! Well, I s’pose he thought I was frightened of him, (and so I might be, I’m sure; for he’s ugly enough to frighten the old devil himself!) for he goes on with,—‘How do I know, as

you haven't made away with some of the property?' says he. 'Why, you little ugly villin!' says I—(I didn't ought to have said it, I know; but I felt mad!)—'do you know who you're a speakin' to?' I says. 'You hear her?' he says, a turnin' to missis, and a liftin' of his nasty eyebrows. 'Yes, love,' she says, all of a tremble. And then, says she, 'Leave the room, Marty!' she says. 'I'm very angry with you!' she says. 'I shan't, mum,' says I, 'not till I know what that there man meant for to say!' 'Marty,' says she, half cryin', 'leave the room! I command—I beg!' I didn't stir. 'For Miss Helen's sake, I ask it,' she says. So, then I went, and sot down in the settle—where you sot, my dear, long ago—and cried my very eyes out. I saw no more of that there Nubley, last night; but, this mornin', as I was a movin' of the breakfast things, he says to me, with a nasty grin,—'Marty,' says he, 'there's a silver spoon, short!' Is there?' I asks, feelin' very queer. 'Yes, Marty; I counted them this mornin', and there is one short. You'll please to find it!' 'Very well,' says I. So I went and looked, and hunted, but couldn't find it, nowhere. So I comed back, and says,—'Can't find it,' says I. '*Can't!*' he says, a mockin' of me; '*can't*, my good Marty? But you *must!*—you *must!*' he says again—this time, very savage. 'Why, what d'you mean?' I says. 'If the spoon's lost, it's lost! I can't help it! I haven't *eat* it!' 'No,' says he; 'but, maybe, you've *stole* it!' I looked at missis; for I was in such a rage, I couldn't speak to him. 'Yes, Marty,' she says, 'I must confess, appearances is much against you!' 'What mum?' I screamed; 'do you suspect me—*me*—Marty—of bein' a *thief*? *Me*, that has served you, faithful, for so many years! *Me*, that brought up my pet, from a little babby, and has loved her, so dear—so dear!' I didn't feel in a rage then. I couldn't go on, for cryin'."

"Oh! Marty—my dear, good Marty!" said Helen. "Well—what followed?"

"Then, that there Nubley, says—'Maria,' says he, 'you would like to have her boxes searched?' 'Certainly,' she says, lookin' down on the floor—not, at me. 'Search away,' says I; 'you'll find nothin' there!' So, up goes missis; and searches my boxes, and finds nothin'. But, all the while, it was comin' across me, how I'd bin a missin' of my tea and

sugar, and other things, ever since that there page come into the house. And, I minded, how I'd found him listenin' at the door the night before, when that there Nubley said as I'd maybe bin conveyin' away the property. So, I says, 'Now, I don't accuse nobody; but that there boy was a listenin' at the door, last night, when you said that there to me; and, p'raps he thinks to himself, 'if I'd steal a spoon, they'd think Marty's took it!' So, if you please mum, I should like to have *his* box searched!' 'Certainly—certainly,' says missis, and tells the page. He says, he's lost the key of the box; but I finds it in his pocket. Then missis, she searches; and there she finds the spoon, wrapped up in a old jacket! Then missis turns very red. 'There aint no deputation on your honesty, Marty,' says she. I says nothin'; but I goes upstairs, to pack up my things, and be off. I was a tyin' of a cord round my last box; when up comes missis. 'My good Marty,' she begins, 'I've come to say, as I'm very sorry for what has happened, and to beg you'll think no more of it.' 'I don't bear malice, mum,' I says; 'but I can't stop with you no longer, after this! You hadn't ought to have served me so, mum, after all these years!' 'Surely, you won't leave me, Marty?' she says; and she holds out her hand. I was goin' to take it—(for it come across me, that that there Nubley had frightened her into havin' my box searched); but when I looked again, I see'd that she was holdin' out a sovring! 'No, mum,' I says, 'I'm not a black nigger-slave, to be bought and sold! I'm a poor woman; but I'm honest! I've a right to be proud in my way, mum, just as much as you have, in yourn! And'—(I felt mad at the sight of her nasty gold; for it reminded me, how she'd sold you, my darling!)—'and I won't stop with you, no longer!' 'Impident, ungrateful cretur!' she screams in a passion. 'I give you war—' 'Stop!' I cries; 'I'll leave, this very minute!—Mind—I've giv'—guv'—gave.—Bother your Lindley Murray!' says I. 'I won't have nothin' more to do with him!—And, 'the bird as sung so sweetly' *ain't* flew!'—no, nor he won't never fly!—never—never!' I says. And then I goes to Peter, and tells him I'll marry him at last; and he's gone for my boxes; and now I've come here, to tell you, my precious!"

"Well, Marty, dear," said Helen, with a sweet smile, "and so, you are not going to be a servant, any more;—and very glad am I, to hear it! And I will go and see you married. You will not wait for *your* trousseau!"

A heavy sigh closed her words.



REMORSE.

AFTER a hard battle with herself, Helen wrote, to ask her mother to come and see her. The next day brought the following answer.—

“MY SWEET CHILD,—My heart yearns towards you ; but I dare not fly to you ! My actions are no longer uncontrolled. Deeply do I deplore the sad estrangement which has arisen between my husband and my child !

“Your afflicted Mother.”

This missive did not deceive Helen ; her eyes were opened, now. She knew that her mother's conscience—the little she possessed—shrank from witnessing the ruin she had created. If she had had anything to gain by it, she might, it is true, have stifled the cries of the disagreeable monitor ; but, that not being the case, she avoided her daughter's presence.

Helen felt relieved ; a meeting would have been painful, and constrained.

Days passed by. John's manner began gradually to abate somewhat of its icy coldness. It may be, he was touched by the gentle sadness, with which Helen bore his harshness ; or, perhaps, her excessive languor, contrasting so forcibly with the sparkling vivacity of old days, alarmed him. By degrees, he began to watch anxiously for a smile—to try to provoke one—to wonder, whether she would ever *laugh* again. Her manner was always the same ;—calm, sad, resigned.

One evening, she was seated on the bench, beneath the elm ; the same seat, on which, years before, they had been wont to

sit, in the summer evenings, and talk so pleasantly. She was so engrossed by her thoughts, that she did not heed his approach.

"Helen, of what are you thinking?" he gently asked.

A soft light beamed in her mournful eyes. He had called her "Helen," and had spoken, without bitterness! She replied,—

"I was thinking of the past—of many scenes and days; of follies and sins, that may be for ever repented, but cannot be atoned! Oh, John!" she supplicated, in piteous accents, "forgive me! forgive me!"

"I do, Helen," he sadly replied. "From my heart, I forgive you! But I have to ask *your* pardon, for my harshness—my brutality!"

"Hush! John," she softly interrupted;—"it was natural—quite natural! I understood it all!—And, are you still my friend?"

"Yes, Helen;—till death!—your friend—your brother!"

"It is all that is left to me, from the wreck of my happiness!" she said. "It is more than I have deserved. I thank God for it!"

"Helen, how you are changed! I never thought *you* could be so humble!"

Her quiet smile returned.—"Nor should I have been, had I not learnt my own unworthiness. A fall, less deep, would not have taught me, how low I was!"

"Helen, sometimes I think, that *I* need such a fall!"

She did not reply; she was thinking within herself, that such a fall he had in truth met with, when she had rejected him; and she began to see, that not to *her*, alone, had the Almighty sent His merciful, chastening rod.

From that day, John was uniformly kind and gentle towards her; but she saw little of him. He came in, at meals; and then, wandered out, for hours, or else, sat in his own room. Helen was content, that it should be so; for the sight of his face, so altered from what it had once been, distressed her, and reminded her of the bitter wrong she had done him.

Daily, letters arrived from Brooks, who lingered near the asylum where his late charge was confined. He had promised

Helen, that he would send her frequent accounts of her husband's state, and let her know, directly any change appeared for the better; so that she might hasten to the spot. But his letters afforded no hope. Each day, were his accounts more discouraging; and at last, he confessed to her, that Arthur's case was regarded as hopeless. A dull, heavy pain, was gnawing at her heart. She could only pray and suffer, and acknowledge, that her trials were of her own creating. Her own share of the affliction, she bore patiently; but, when she dwelt upon the horrible fate of her unfortunate husband, she felt it hard, to submit to the rod. How her thoughts flew back to the time, when she had first met Arthur! How she recalled, the bright eye, the elastic step, the happy laugh, the gentle voice, of him, who now, chained and coerced, passed his days, and nights, in fearful ravings, or, cowered in one corner of his cell—sullen and malignant, full of impotent rage, and of a thirst for destruction, like that which had prompted him, in the mad excitement of that fearful storm, to murder the being who curbed and restrained him. Then, in the midst of her thoughts of grief and pity, she would shudder, as she called to mind, the fearful danger, to which she had been so long exposed. And, through it all, was a struggle—earnest, yet half-unavailing—to forgive the author of all her misery;—her heartless, mammon-loving mother, who, *knowingly*, had consigned her to such a fate. Her eyes were opened; she saw that mother's faults, broadly and glaringly. She saw, that *self*, often disguised under the mask of devotion to others, lay at the bottom of all that she did; that all her actions were guided by a miserable, shallow, mercenary spirit, which would have prompted her to commit any act of iniquity, so that it could be done with impunity. Then, Helen bewailed her own wretched infatuation—her miserable weakness—her want of principle. Had she but acted with common rectitude, not all her mother's schemes could have entailed on her her present misery. Had she but resisted the temptations of her own evil heart,—filled, as it was, with unchecked passions—vanity, pride, envy, hatred, jealousy, covetousness;—she might now have been a happy wife.

Such were the thoughts, which for ever weighed upon her;

which drew floods of tears, from eyes that once had been so bright ; stole the bloom and roundness from her cheek ; and made her step, heavy and slow, and her voice, weak and broken. No wonder, that John could not cherish his resentment—that his heart ached, at sight of her. And, if he could have read the *divine* appeal, that rose from that poor, crushed spirit, he would ~~have~~ pitied yet more—if that were possible.—

“Lord, I have sinned against Thee, most of all ; but Thou art God—not man—and canst forgive—aye, *more* than ‘seventy times seven!’ I can do nothing, to wash out my sin, before *Thee* ; but Thou wilt forgive, because Thou hast suffered in my place ! Thou wilt pardon all, who kneel at the foot of Thy Cross ; and Thou wilt comfort, in due time ; for Thou art so loving, and merciful ! But oh ! my Father, in pardoning my sin, and in sending me Thy Peace, grant me, that I may make *some* atonement—*some* reparation—to the good heart, that I have wounded ! I cannot expiate my sin before *Thee*—I can only lean upon Thy mercy ; but oh ! let me atone to *him* ! Let me see him happy, with one, who will deserve, better than I did, to be his wife !”

And thus she would pray and weep—sometimes, during the livelong night. But not a murmur ever escaped her. She felt, that, tried as she was, she had deserved a yet heavier punishment ; and she thanked the All-Merciful, that He had been pleased to afflict her thus, rather than to cut her off, in the midst of her sins, and leave her no power to turn to Him, “in whom, alone, is fullness of life.”



RETURNING PEACE.

MARTY'S wedding passed off very brilliantly ; and Helen decked her face in smiles, that day, so that no shadow should fall upon the heart of her faithful friend. Every day, she strolled into the village—she was strong enough to walk, now—to see Marty, and to please the good soul, by some fresh commendation of her abode, which Helen had adorned (after much battling with Marty) with everything that she knew the good servant had all her life been longing to possess.

"Bless you, my darling !" Marty would say. "You're gettin' to look like your own precious self again ! We shall have the roses back in the cheeks next week—I shouldn't wonder !"

And Helen would smile, and call Marty a flatterer, and walk towards home, with a heart, all the lighter, for having made a human creature happy. On her way, she would stop, to see one or other of the villagers, who were not so well off as her old friend ; and seldom did she quit one of those lowly dwellings, without leaving behind her, a portion of that comfort, of which she herself stood so much in need.

But, in truth, the consoler was all the while unconsciously receiving, as well as imparting, consolation, and was realising the truth of those words, so often fulfilled, even on earth,—
"Give, and it shall be given unto you ; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over." Yes, the Peace of God was gradually falling upon her troubled spirit, stilling its stormy waves. The light of His countenance was

shedding its holy sunshine upon the darkness of her affliction. She was beginning to feel such a calm, that she no longer shrank from the idea of a long life. Truly, the "Peace of God, which passeth all understanding," is a thing to be prayed for, and struggled for;—a thing, to be so earnestly desired, that all other things, however dear, should weigh not one grain in the balance, against its possession!

Helen longed, much, to see her dear old friend, Mr. Wilson; but he was abroad. He wrote to her, often, however, and his letters, sensible, kind, and good, were read, and re-read, till she knew them by heart.

Much of Helen's time was passed with Lucy; and, in the contemplation of her friend's happiness, she often forgot, for awhile, how sadly her own had been wrecked. For she had learnt to taste that blessing, which falls within the reach of most, after their own hopes have set in gloom;—care for others, joy in their joy, and sorrow in their sorrow.

Mrs. Nubley did not call; and Helen was invariably told, when she went to see her mother, that she was "not at home." In church, she sometimes had a glimpse of her; but, even then, the dreaded gaze of the ferocious Nubley was viciously fastened upon his trembling spouse; so that her eyes, and Helen's, never met.

Two months had passed away; and Helen prepared to return to Staniswood—with what sorrow, none but herself could tell.

At last, the dreaded day arrived; and she bade adieu to her kind friends. When she had to say farewell to Marty, the poor soul burst out sobbing; and Helen nearly gave way. But, there was one more goodbye, to be said; and she quailed before it, and thought she could never say the words. At last, she placed her hand in his, and faltered,—

"Goodbye, John. We may not meet again; but I shall always pray for you—always bless you, for your goodness to me, who have so little deserved it!"

"Hush! hush!" he said, as if pained by her words.

The train was in motion.—"Goodbye, Helen. God bless you, poor child!"

He wrung her hand, and turned resolutely away.

For a long while, she did not look up—she scarcely re-

remembered where she was. Her thoughts had flown back to past years :—to the shady seat, on the smooth lawn—to the large room—the cheerful fire—the arm-chair, where a kind lady used to sit, with an old picture-book in her lap, while two children turned the pages. And a tall, thoughtful boy, (but, to them, he seemed a man) had turned to the picture, where the monster, Mammon, had tempted the luckless pilgrims, to desert the happy valley, in order to worship at his shrine.

Oh ! Mammon ! Mammon !



DISCIPLINE.

STANISWOOD again.

Helen did not sit down, idly, to nurse her sorrow. She knew, too well, why that sorrow had been sent to her. She knew, that her Heavenly Parent, in love and mercy, had chastened her, with his afflicting rod; just as an earthly parent scourges the child whom he loves, when he deems it essential to that child's welfare.

We are, all of us, too apt to think, that, when we have sinned, and Almighty retribution follows the sin, God punishes us, in *anger*. But, the child, who quails under his father's just punishment, might as well think, that that father, whose heart bleeds, while he corrects, feels pleasure in his chastisement. Oh, no! The afflictions of the Almighty, are even as the sharp knife, or as the bitter draught, of the skilful leech. Bitter, and sharp, they are, at the time; but, who would lie down quietly, to die, rather than avail himself of their healing power?

Even so, Helen felt that her trials had been needful to the saving of her soul; and she prayed earnestly, that they might prove a blessing—not a curse, as, alas, they too frequently do, when they are received in an unthankful blindness of heart, by those, who cannot—will not—see, that the gentle hand of a loving and merciful God, is then drawing them from the brink of the precipice. Helen did not seek to banish the memory of the past; she dwelt on it, frequently, and remembered, with tears of penitence, her sins against

God and man, and, chiefly, her treachery towards him, whose worth she knew, too late. But she did not allow herself to become enervated by her grief; she only dwelt upon it, long enough, to be profited by it—sobered into resignation. Her time was spent, in a routine of active duties, the mere thought of which, would formerly have disgusted her. She found much occupation in the village; sorrow, to be soothed—joy, to be sympathised in—sickness, to be tended—want, to be alleviated; and she marvelled, how she could have suffered so many years of her life, to pass, without having tasted that most refined of all kinds of selfishness—the pleasure of doing good. And, by degrees, her step became less languid, her cheek regained somewhat of its former roundness, and a faint tinge of colour, replacing its marble whiteness, reminded those who had known her in former days, of the brilliant glow that had once been there. But her voice was very low and sad, and inexpressibly sweet; and the meek glance of her down-cast eyes, had nothing in common with the Helen of old times.

Twelve months passed; and she at last yielded to Mrs. Howard's entreaties, that she would pay her another visit.

Again John was listening for the sound of the carriage-wheels; but, this time, without any of those bitter feelings, which had before agitated him. Mrs. Howard had gone to the station, to meet Helen; but he had remained behind—not, from any lingering feeling of pique, or nervousness, but, because he knew, that Helen could never calmly approach the scene of her early years, and lost happiness; and he thought, that his mother's presence, alone, would be excitement enough for her.

Again the young meek face was before him—yet meeker than it had been, though not so sad as the last time. There was no awkwardness—no embarrassment. Tea had been prepared; and they at once sat down to it.

Helen looked round, with a sigh of comfort, on the snowy cloth, that covered the tea-table; and the hissing noise of the urn was music to her ears. After a draught of the refreshing beverage, she exclaimed, "Oh! how nice!" in a way, that reminded them of past days.

"And, Marty's baby—" she asked; "is it like Marty?"

"I don't see that it differs, in any respect, from all the babies I have ever seen," John replied, very drily. "They are all alike—mottled, and ugly! But, beware of saying, it resembles Marty! She pronounces it to be 'the very spit of his father!'"

"And I am to be god-mother.—Dear Marty! I would not, for the world, have missed it!—And, to think of the good soul calling it 'Helen,' instead of 'Marty!'"

"If it had been a boy, it was to have been called, 'John,'" said Mrs. Howard.

"And Lucy's baby—how I long to see it! What a happy life it is, for dear Lucy!"

She sighed, and mused on her mother's words, before Lucy's marriage. She resumed.—

"Do you ever see mamma, now?"

"Very rarely," Mrs. Howard replied. "I fear that her husband discourages her intimacy with old friends. I suppose he thinks, she might make revelations, not at all conducive to their favourable opinion of his character."

"Does she look happy?"

"It is impossible to judge—I have seldom more than a glimpse of her face," was the evasive reply.

"Is she well dressed? Does he seem to treat her liberally?"

Mrs. Howard was silent; but John broke in with,—

"No, he's a mean rascal; and I should like to tell him so! Your mother is not only shabbily dressed, but looks half-starved; and the anxious, scrutinising attention, with which she watches her husband, betrays, plainly enough, that he treats her ill. By heaven! I should like to give him a good caning!—and I would, too, if he were a younger man!"

Thus did John feel, towards her, whose selfish, worldly, policy, had snatched the cup of happiness from his lips, and consigned the woman he loved, to a living death! Truly, he was a greater hero, than he, who, amidst the cannon's roar, and the excitement of battle, rushes on, to a glorious death! For he had gained that great victory—the greatest that *can* be gained;—the victory over his own evil passions! And, as day after day, and week after week, passed, he learnt to appreciate, yet more, those quiet, Christian graces, which he had once,

though unconsciously, almost despised. As he contrasted Helen's patience, meekness, gentleness, with her former untamed vivacity, the quiet virtues, which had at one time seemed to him, tame, and insipid, now assumed a nobler form; and he thought,—

“Yes; I would rather see her thus—even though she is lost to me—I would rather see her, chastened, humbled, but adorned with all these God-like attributes, than, as I once knew her,—proud, imperious, exacting, unchristian. I cannot regret the past; for her, it was necessary—for me, doubly so. True, the old dream has fled—she is now but as a sister to me; but, better such a sister as she is, than such a wife as she would have been!”



AN UNEXPECTED EVENT.

AGAIN Helen was preparing to leave; and, this time, Mrs. Howard was to accompany her. It was the day but one, before her departure, and she was more agitated than she had been for some time; for she had written a note to her mother, begging her to come and see her; and Mrs. Nubley had sent back to tell her, that her husband was absent from Brockley, and that she would be glad, if Helen would call.

"You are doing what is right, Helen," said John, approvingly; as he opened the door, for her to leave the house.

Helen hardly knew, whether she derived the more pleasure, from the sense of his approbation, or, from the knowledge, that his old proud and unforgiving spirit had died away. She walked on, her heart full of mingled feelings;—sorrow for her mother—a sort of nervous dread of meeting her—a sensation, half-pleasing, half-painful, at the thought of once more seeing the little cottage; and, amidst it all, deep sadness at her approaching departure from Brockley. She hesitated, as she raised her hand to the bell; then, summoning courage, she pulled it, and, after twice repeating the operation, a dirty youth made his appearance, in answer to the summons.

For a moment, she could not help thinking, that it would have been kinder, if her mother, (whose face she had seen peeping through the blind,) had, herself, come to the door; but she banished the idea, and at once followed the dirty page into the drawing-room.

Mrs. Nubley, evidently attired for the occasion, was seated on the couch ; but she rose, and bestowed an affecting embrace on her daughter. Helen thawed, as her eyes fell upon the worn black silk dress, on the coarse collar and sleeves, and on the faded and soiled head-dress before her ; for she knew, that Mrs. Nubley would never, voluntarily, have presented herself, in such attire. Then, her eyes wandered anxiously, to her mother's face ; and in its sharp lines, and faded hue, she read a tale, for which, not even Mrs. Howard's hints had prepared her.

"My dear mamma ! Oh ! my dear mamma !"

All the wrong, the cruelty, the deceit, had vanished from her memory. She burst into tears.

Mrs. Nubley was surprised ; she had not expected this. Even *her* marble heart was touched, by such a proof of forgiveness, from one, whom she had so greatly wronged. She faltered,—

"You are too good to me, Helen—"

"Don't, mamma!—don't!" pleaded Helen, through her tears.

But her mother continued.—

"Yes, too good to me!—You would have been happy, but for me!"

"No, mamma," Helen firmly replied ; "I should *not* have been happy ! It has been all for the best—all for the best !"

"And you can say so, Helen !" ejaculated her mother, in amazement. "—But you cannot possibly *feel* it—I am sure you cannot !"

"Yes, mamma—I *do* feel it. I was living, in the unrestrained indulgence of my passions ; and needed some great check—or, God knows what would have become of me ! I have had it ; and, at last, from my heart I can say,—thank God !"

"I cannot, Helen ! I cannot be thankful, for either your lot, or my own !"

"Oh, mamma ! you would be, if you could only take it, not as the punishment of an angry God, but, of a loving parent, willing, by inflicting a little pain on his child, to save it from lasting torture !"

"A *little* pain ?" her mother fretfully exclaimed ; "—a

'little!' Is it a *little* pain, to be living with one, whom you loathe and detest—who coerces you, in every thought, word, and deed?"

"Is it not better, mamma, to suffer even that, if it lead you to seek comfort from a Source, whence you would otherwise turn aside?"

"Nonsense, Helen! I did not need so heavy a trial! I am a good Christian—I go to church twice a day—and, in the week, during Lent; I subscribe to the clothing fund; I read family prayers every morning and evening—besides my Bible at other times. I—"

"Yes, mamma; but, for all that, God may see that your heart is set upon this world, rather than upon the next; and—"

"Oh! don't preach, Helen! You have learnt that, from the Howards!" Mrs. Nubley ejaculated, so impatiently, that Helen saw it would be useless to persevere, and, therefore, changed the subject.

"I am most grieved to hear, that you are not happy, dear mamma. Tell me, if I can assist you in any way."

"No, love; I fear that nothing can be done. Even the two hundred per annum, for which I am indebted to your liberal munificence, does not do me much good. *He* knows, how much I receive, and when I receive it; and makes me hand every farthing of it over to him. He does not know, love, that it comes from you; perhaps, he would refuse to receive it, if he did know—for his love of money is only equalled by his implacable animosity towards anyone who happens to offend him.—That is why I did not tell him."

Mrs. Nubley did not think it advisable, to favour Helen with her true reason for not having enlightened her husband on the subject of her income. The fact was, she did not dare, further to exasperate him, by confessing, that she had duped him into the belief, that he was marrying an heiress, while, in reality, she was possessed of only a precarious allowance from her daughter. Helen knew this, however; and she sighed, to think, how all her mother's schemes had turned to so many scourges of her peace.

"Dear mamma," she resumed, "you know that I have

more money, than I know what to do with. I thought, before coming here, that you might be in want of a little. You must not refuse!—you would do just the same for me, if you had it, and I were in want.”

(Helen's conscience did not quite acquit her, as she spoke these last words.)

“My dearest child!”

The pocket-handkerchief was flourished, as of old; and the proffered donation was accepted, and laid on the table, beside her.

“But is he so very unkind to you?” pursued Helen.

This time, the tears in her mother's eyes, were genuine.—

“My dear, his cruelty and brutality are more than I can describe!—Even blows—”

Helen's eyes flashed, with something of their former fire.—

“Mamma! mamma! this must not be! You must leave him! You—”

Her mother started, nervously. “Hush! Hush!” she whispered, her face, blanched with terror. “Didn't you hear a step? He lets himself in, with a latch-key! He cannot have returned?”

“When did he say, he would be back?” asked Helen.

“Let me see—” and she felt nervously for a memorandum-book. “Oh, yes! it is all right! I thought I could not have made such a mistake!” “See!—the day after to-morrow. So we are quite safe! Oh! if you only knew, what a comfort it is, to be rid of him, for even these few days! His presence destroys every enjoyment! Nothing that could happen to me, could give me pleasure now;—no, not even if old Stub were to die, and leave me a hundred a year!—for *he* would lay his claws on it, directly, and I should be none the better for it. My life is wretched!”

“But, mamma, dear, he cannot love you, treating you as he does! Surely he would not object to a separation! Come to me—to Staniswood! There is plenty of room, in that great, dull house!”

She sighed deeply, as she spoke. “Ah! how gladly would I leave him!—” she began. But the sentence remained unfinished.

“Would you, indeed, ma'am?” roared a voice, which drove

every atom of colour from her face. And the enraged Nubley flew into the room.

Mrs. Nubley made one agile leap, *en arrière*. Helen rose, and quietly placed herself between the pair.

"Would you, indeed?" roared the infuriated Edwin, even louder than before. "—And, how dare *you* come here, with your cursed artifice, to try to set my wife against me?" he shouted, almost beside himself with rage, turning sharply upon Helen.

She made no reply; but she looked at him, very steadily, and remained standing, between the two. Her calmness exasperated him.

"How *dare* you, I say—how *dare* you come sneaking here, in my absence, to poison her ear against me? Do you read, in your Bible, which you pretend to be so fond of, that it is right, to set a wife against her husband—eh? What right have you, to dictate to her? How is she one farthing the better off, for your marriage, I should like to know? You've got your money; and you take deuced good care to keep it! You'd let her starve—as she would have done, if she hadn't married me; and then you try, out of spite, to get her away! If that's your religion, I think you'd better be without it!"

Helen turned quietly from him, and addressed her mother.

"I don't mind it, dear mamma. It does not hurt me."

But Mrs. Nubley was not so anxious about her daughter's feelings. She was in terror, on her own account.

"I am sure, love," she pleaded, addressing her spouse, "we were not speaking against you.—Were we, Helen?"

Helen was silent. Mr. Nubley, who had only paused for breath, burst forth anew.

"Not speaking against me?—not against me?—when I heard that woman tell you, I didn't care a rush for you, and ask you, to go to her? I wish I'd waited to hear more!—I only wish I had!—But, I couldn't—I was in too great a rage! Ah! I tricked you nicely, ma'am! I knew she'd be here, as soon as my back was turned; so, I pretended I was going away to Blenkinsdon, for three days, and then only went to Hapsley, ma'am—only to Hapsley!"

His rage was horrible to behold. His last few words were uttered in a sort of snarl, like that of a wild beast.

"And, as for *you*," he shouted, addressing Helen, "begone! and never again darken these doors!—Ha! what's that?" he cried, as his glance fell upon the notes, lying on the table.

"A little—a most unexpected—remittance from my bankers, dear Edwin," replied his victim, in accents, which were rendered, by terror, almost unintelligible.

The sight of the money seemed to soothe him. He hastily gathered up the notes, counted them, and deposited them in his pocket-book, saying,—

"You are so careless about money! They will be much safer in my keeping!"

And he glanced, with a hang-dog expression, at Helen.

"Now," he said, "go; and let me never see your face again! If that fool of a woman listened to you, she would drive me as mad, as you have driven your husband—poor devil!"

"God forgive you!" said Helen, in a trembling voice.

She hastily kissed her mother; and left.

Slowly did she return; lingering on the way, to conquer her agitation, the sight of which, would, she knew, distress her kind friends. Mechanically she entered the house; and not until she had sat down in the parlour, did she see, that it was not the servant, who admitted her.

"Mr. Brooks!"

There was a certain awe, in his face, that made her hurriedly gasp forth,—

"Arthur!—is he ill?—Or—oh! Yes—yes!—surely you have come, to take me to him! He will know me, now!—Oh! speak—speak—for mercy's sake!"

"Helen, poor girl! You will never again meet him, in this world!"

His words were so solemn—so deeply sad and pitying—that a great horror and dread took possession of her. Mrs. Howard advanced, from the other end of the room, and gently drew her to her heart.

"My Helen, try to see the hand of God, in this, also!"

She looked up in their faces; and her gaze was so wildly earnest and beseeching, that, as if with one accord, they replied,—

"Yes, his troubles are ended! He is at rest!"



SICKNESS.

It was three months later. Helen was but just recovering from the terrible illness, that succeeded the announcement of her husband's death. The constant excitement and agitation, to which she had been more or less subject, ever since her marriage, had so weakened her, that she seemed unable to rally; and nothing less than the most vigilant care and attention, could have saved her. It was a sad time for Mrs. Howard. In addition to her own anxiety on Helen's account, she was distressed at the sight of John's frantic grief and despair, at the thought of her death. He stationed himself at her chamber door, hardly leaving it, night or day. With his own hands, he administered the medicine, smoothed the pillows, bathed the scorching brow. He wearied the doctor, with questions—with entreaties to know the worst; and broke into wild lamentations, when told, that there was little room for hope. But at last, a faint glimmering of amendment began to appear. She grew better—but very, very slowly. The doctor became sanguine; but, fearful of a relapse, would not pronounce with certainty. At last, however, taking John with him into the parlour, he said,—

“You may hope, now.—I have little doubt of her recovery.”

John felt suffocating. He gasped for air, moved to the window, clasped his hands over his face, and burst into tears.

The doctor was an old friend. He laid his hand on John's shoulder.—

“John, you love her!”

He did not then pay much heed to his friend's words—he was too full of joy; but they recurred to him, afterwards.

When Helen returned to consciousness, she found Marty and Mrs. Howard sitting beside her. She could not understand it; and lay, for some time, silently watching them. But at last, she spoke.

"What is the matter?"

"Dear love—don't ee talk!" pleaded Marty, bending down to kiss her.

"I have been ill?"

"Yes, my own,—with brain fever; and if you talk, you'll be bad again, and make us all miserable."

"Marty—Mrs. Howard—kiss me. If I die——"

"Hush! Helen, my dear. You will be ill again," whispered Mrs. Howard.

Helen obeyed; as much from exhaustion, as from inability to collect her ideas, and frame them into words; for her mind still wandered painfully. Her eyes roved, anxiously, in quest of something. At last she spoke.

"Who is dead? I can't remember."

They did not answer. She went on.—

"Where is he? Where is John?"

Those feeble words had caught his ear; he entered the room.

She had evidently forgotten much of the past. Reason had only partially resumed her seat.

"Dear John! Dear John!" she said, very softly.

He did not speak—he could not.

"Where is mamma?" were her next words; but, without waiting for a reply, she closed her eyes. Soon after, she slept.

From that day, though she had to struggle against terrible exhaustion, she continued to progress towards recovery; and, two months later—five months from the date of poor Arthur's death—she was moved down-stairs.

She had been gradually made aware of the truth; and had received it, with feelings of mingled awe and sorrow. Her altered prospects gave her no concern. Though the next of kin had entered into possession of Staniswood, her reminiscences of it, were too sad, to allow her to regret the change;

and her widow's dower, though small, in comparison with her former income, exceeded her wants. Mrs. Howard would not hear of her leaving; so she was obliged to content herself with a protest, that she would go, as soon as she was well again; and she smiled sadly, as she thought, how long a time must elapse, before that could be.

But, as Helen progressed towards recovery, she began to feel, that John's manner was not what it had been. She could not imagine, how she had offended him; but supposed, that her long illness, and the gloom it had cast over the house, had wearied even his patience; and she did not wonder at it. He seemed glad to get away from her—glad, to receive any commission, that kept him away for whole hours. He would carry off his books, or writing, to his room; and when, after long absence, he returned to the sitting-room, he would be abstracted, and silent, and would give short, abrupt, and sometimes not over-courteous, answers to her remarks. She felt pained; but bore all, with untiring patience, till he would sometimes exclaim,—“I am a great rough bear, Helen!” or, “Forgive me! I have been unkind!” And then she would hold out her poor little thin hand, to him, and say something, kind and gentle; and he would hate himself, for his roughness.

Thus passed the weeks and months.



SORROW AGAIN.

MAY—delicious May—had come; and returning health shed such peace into her spirit, that she was able to enjoy the warm sun, and blue sky, and the song of the birds, as she had not done for a long time. Taking a book, she stepped from the open window, and, crossing the lawn, seated herself under the elm-tree.

But the book fell unheeded from her hand. She could not read;—she was too far lost, in thoughts and dreamings. Gradually, the happy glow faded from her cheek, and her eyes grew dim.

She was thinking, how soon her happiness must have an end—how soon she must tear herself away, from this loved spot; and her conscience incessantly repeated to her,—“You have drawn it down upon your own head! There was a time, when your presence did not weary him!”

“A delicious day, Helen,” said John, approaching her.

“Yes,” she replied, rallying from her gloomy fit; “it makes one feel quite young again. I could almost fancy myself, fifteen, instead of nearly twenty three!”

The glow upon her cheek, and the light in her eye, seemed somehow to clash with his feelings. He rejoined,—

“Oh! some people *always* feel young! *nothing* sobers them!”

He spoke sarcastically; and she felt, that his speech was aimed at her. Sadly she replied,—

“If I am not yet sobered, I must, indeed, be incorrigible! Perhaps, I am!”

He felt pained, and said, in an altered tone,—

"No, Helen, I did not mean to be unkind—"

"I am glad of it!" she interrupted. "I should not have liked, to part thus."

"To *part*, Helen? I thought you would not leave us!"

"Oh, yes—I must! My presence casts its shadow, everywhere;—at least, I feel as if it did. Even you——" She stopped.

"What were you going to say, Helen?" he asked, very gently.

She hesitated, and then tremblingly replied,—

"It is very natural—quite inevitable; but I see that my illness—my weakness—perhaps, my fretfulness and impatience—have tired you of me. I have made your home gloomy. I——"

"Helen!" he exclaimed, in accents, that made her look up in his face, and see there, an expression of such mingled amazement, grief, and affection, as surprised her. "Helen, never say that again! You surely know me better!"

"I did not speak in anger, John. I thought it very natural——"

"No, it would not be natural!" he vehemently interrupted. "It would be *unnatural*—monstrous,—if your helplessness—your weakness—your affliction—did not endear you to me, all the more!"

The sun was setting; and his rays fell upon John's face. Helen looked once; and then, turned away. The next moment, though she scarcely heard the sound of his retreating footsteps, on the soft lawn, she knew that she was alone.

"I might have lived here always! I might have been all the world to him;—honoured—loved—trusted! But, why think of what I *might* have been? I chose my own path; and I must walk in it!"

She was very quiet, that evening;—so quiet, that Mrs. Howard regarded her anxiously, fearing that she was not well.

"Does your head ache, my dear?"

Helen made no answer; but she leant her brow against the kind hand.

"You have tired yourself, Helen, and feel ill. Else, why should you shed tears?"

"Tears?" exclaimed John, who had been pretending to read. "Why, Helen, what is the matter?"

"Nothing," she replied, but in so low a voice, that they could scarcely hear her;—"nothing. Only, I have been so happy here, that the thought of leaving, is very hard to bear!"

"Of leaving?" they cried. "Why should you leave?"

"Why should I not?" she asked, with a feeble smile. "If you were not the kindest and dearest friends in the world, I should have worn out my welcome, long ago!"

"Hush! Helen, my dear," said Mrs. Howard, very gently.

"Not even in jest, should you speak so, to us!"

"Nor would I—nor would I! but my heart is breaking!—Oh! I am wretched!—wretched!"

"You are tired, love. Come to bed now; or you will be ill again."

And Helen suffered herself to be led away, and soothed to rest, as though she had been a child.

John waited anxiously below, till his mother returned.

"Is she better now, mother?"

"Yes, John."

"Is she asleep?"

"I think she soon will be."

"How did she look?"

"Very tired, poor girl; but, happier than just now."

"It was all my fault!"

"How, John?"

"I was unkind—brutal—to her, in the garden"—(his voice trembled)—"and she thinks, poor thing! that we are tired of nursing her, and that she makes us gloomy, and—Oh! it's all my fault! Don't let her go, mother; let *me* leave, if the sight of me makes her sad!"

"No, no, John," his mother gravely replied; "no one must leave. But I am glad you have told me this—very glad. Poor dear child! she is still so weak. Be more careful, in future, John!"

"Mother, suppose you were just to step quietly to her door, and listen, whether she sleeps?"

"I will, my dear."

Hearing Helen moving restlessly, she entered the room.

"Can't you sleep, my dear Helen?"

"I shall, soon, I daresay. How sorry I am, to give so much trouble!" she sighed.

"Your head aches, dear child?"

"Not much."

"My dear, you won't talk of leaving us?"

Helen made no answer.

"John is sadly distressed, at the thought of your departure."

"Indeed!"

Soon after, she slept.



A SURPRISE.

THE soft light of happiness was quietly returning to the fair young face; and John's voice had lost its roughness, and his brow, its stern bend. When his glance rested upon Helen, it was very gentle and sweet; and she felt it, and began to look forward to life, as yet possessing some charm.

"I don't think I shall live to be old," she thought; "and, perhaps, they will keep me with them till I die. To her, I shall be a daughter—to him, a sister. It will be a happy life—far happier than I have any right to expect. He may marry; but, even then, his mother will not cast me off—*she* will always love me! And, even if I outlive her—the only *mother* I have ever known—poor Marty, will still love me;—I can go to Marty!"

Such were her thoughts; but, as months flew by, other hopes began to dawn in her heart. For John's manner changed—but, this time, the change did not distress her. He no longer treated her, as a sister—there was more than a *brother's* love, in his words and accents. It seemed as if he could not bear to be absent from her, for one moment. If she were out of the room, he would watch the door, until she re-appeared. He followed her like a shadow; so that she felt, in his absence, as if half herself were wanting. No longer did he court little missions, that would banish him from her presence; he seemed to exist in it alone. Helen felt, that thus could she live, for ever.

Time flew on, and it was now more than a year since

Arthur's death; when, on entering the breakfast-room, one morning, Helen was surprised, at finding a stranger, seated there.—A stranger? No;—surely she had met him before? Yes; a moment's reflection brought to mind, when, and how, she had met him. He was Mr Bushby—Mrs. Huntingdon's cousin.

Helen had always disliked the man; but sorrow had softened her feelings, towards even him, and she held out her hand.

"Has Mr. Brooks arrived?" he asked.

"No. Is he coming?"

"Yes. He has news for you."

No more was said; and, in constrained silence, (for none of them liked him,) they sat down.

Before long, Brooks arrived. Him, Helen was glad to see; she knew he was her friend. After breakfast, Mrs. Howard and John retired, leaving Helen with the two newcomers.

"Now, Bushby," said Brooks, "perform your part of the mission; and, as Mrs. Huntingdon is totally unacquainted with legal forms and phraseology, pray simplify the affair, as much as possible.

"It is easily explained," began Mr. Bushby, with his mean smirk. "I have the pleasure of informing you, that, in consequence of the demise of your relative ——"

"Mr. Stubmore—" quickly interrupted Brooks.

"You succeed to the possession of his entire wealth—with the exception of some trifling bequests."

"There, that will do!" interposed Brooks. "And, now, leave it to me, to explain the rest."

Mr. Bushby bowed; and left the room, glad, apparently, to get away.

"This is all a mystery to me!" ejaculated Helen. "It seems incredible, that the old man should have treated mamma so insultingly—never have evinced the slightest interest in me, and yet, have left me this large fortune!—Besides, he has sons, has he not?"

"I can explain it all. Mr. Stubmore had an insurmountable aversion to your mother; he thought he had sufficient proof, of her being a worldly, time-serving, heartless woman.

He warned your father, that, if he married her, he would never see his face again. Your father, nevertheless, made her his wife. Thereupon, Mr. Stubmore married, determined, to leave his wealth to his own children. His wife died; then his sons, who had always been sickly, followed her to the grave; and he found himself, without an heir—without a single being, to shed a tear over his grave. Trouble, disappointment, and sickness, softened a nature, that had once been stern and unyielding; and, as old age approached, he looked back upon his past life, and sorrowed at the thought, that he had suffered your father, whom he had loved as a son, to go down to the grave, without forgiveness. The feeling grew upon him; and, mingled with it, was a passionate longing, to behold the child of his lost nephew, and to atone to her, for his implacable anger towards her parent. So strong did this feeling become, that he at last decided on making you his heir. Now, listen.—

The lawyer, employed by him, to make out the will, was Bushby—Mrs. Huntingdon's cousin. (This part of the story, I was bound not to reveal, till after your uncle's death). Knowing that Mrs. Huntingdon was anxious to procure a wife for her son—one too, whose fortune should place both herself, and his mother, above the chances that might befall them, in case of poor Arthur's sudden death—Bushby agreed to point out an heiress, to, at least, twelve thousand a year, provided Mrs. Huntingdon would pay him five thousand pounds, directly the said heiress came into her wealth. To this condition, she acceded.

What was her astonishment, on learning, that her son's intended bride, was the daughter of an old school-fellow! You know the rest;—how she posted here—schemed—planned—triumphed!

Helen knew, indeed, and could have groaned at the thought, of how her own mother had been snared, in the net of her own weaving; how she, herself, had fallen into the snare, only through want of common simplicity and truth.

"But," Brooks resumed, "Bushby did not calculate upon Mrs. Huntingdon's sudden death; and now, although your uncle has left you his fortune, *he* is none the better for it. He builds his hopes, however, on your respect for the me-

mory of his cousin, which, he imagines, will induce you to fulfil the promise she made him. He had the assurance to offer me—*me!*—one quarter of the sum, provided I procured it for him, from you!”

“But, how am I to know that she promised it? What assurance have I, beyond his word?”

“He holds a paper, written and signed by Mrs. Huntingdon, appealing to you, in case of her death, to ‘discharge a debt’ due to her cousin. Alas! she had no secrets from me; and I know, that the man speaks the truth!”

“I will pay it.”

“By no means. The fellow has no right to the money. Mrs. Huntingdon had no right to promise that, which was not her own.”

But, that same evening, Mr. Bushby shewed her Mrs. Huntingdon’s note; and Helen, sick and disheartened at this further revelation of treachery, and longing to be quit of the man’s presence, signed the necessary deed, and thus got rid of him.

That same evening, Brooks drew a letter from his pocket, and, handing it to Helen, said, very quietly,—

“Be brave! be strong! Yet one more sorrow awaits you! I do trust, it will be the last! Have you no suspicion of the truth?—That your uncle, using, for the time, his christian name, as a surname, under the shelter of that incognito, at last gratified the wish, that had been growing for years;—that he met you—loved you—strengthened you for the trials that were before you (though he knew not their precise nature) ——”

“Oh! for mercy’s sake, don’t tell me, that I have lost *him!*—my dear old friend!”

“It is so, poor girl!”

She could bear no more. She hurried from the room; and, far into the night, they could hear her, sobbing, and lamenting the loss of one, who had been as a father to her.

Some days after, she received a more detailed account, of much, that had before seemed unaccountable.—Mrs. Huntingdon and Mr. Wilson had entered into a compact, to conceal his relationship from Helen; for, knowing Mrs. Grey’s antipathy to him, he feared that her child might have imbibed

somewhat of the same feeling; and he could not bear the thought of not winning her affection. Hence, he had, day after day, and week after week, postponed the revelation; till, at last, he had not had courage to make it. This, and much more, did she hear; and the intelligence was fully confirmed, by the letter Mr. Wilson had written to her. In it, he informed her, that he had left Mrs. Nubley two hundred per annum, in token of his forgiveness of the past; and, at the same time, he made it his particular request, that Helen should never bestow one farthing on her mother;—with which request, she complied, no less from reverence for him by whom it was made, than from the conviction, that no amount of wealth could now afford pleasure to her worldly parent, since it was immediately deposited in the coffers of her tyrant.

Another bequest afforded Helen unmingled joy. To Marty, Mr. Wilson bequeathed a legacy, of fifty pounds a year,—to her, an enormous income!

Truly, the heartless mother had turned her back upon the happy valley, and toiled painfully up the steep ascent, to worship the idol, Mammon; and when she had attained the summit, she found his worship, slavery; and the bright metal, which had shone with such lustre from afar, was forged into chains, that ground into her very soul!

And is it not ever thus?

LXXXVI

HUMILITY, AND PRIDE.

HAD Helen offended John ?

He had changed again ;—so suddenly—so unaccountably ! Even his mother, could not imagine the cause—could not answer Helen's anxious questions. He was not merely cold ;—he was brusque—harsh. He found fault with all that she said, and did ; and seemed to take pleasure, in wounding her feelings. Day by day, she grew sadder ; and the old look of suffering, returned to her face.

It was an autumn day—a quiet, sober autumn day, clad in its garment of brown and russet. Its dropping leaves sounded like sighs ; and the gentle wailing of the breeze, as it swept, now and then, round the angle of the wall, was like the plaintive song of one in grief.

Helen was plying her needle. John looked up impatiently, once or twice. At last, he said,—

“The sound of that stitching fidgets me !”

She gently laid aside her work ; in a few minutes, he resumed,—

“I hate to see a woman, doing nothing !”

She made no reply ; but, ~~take~~ ^{took} up a pencil, set to work on a drawing, she had begun that morning.

“I'm *sick* of this place !” he exclaimed, after a pause.

“Oh, John ! I should never tire of it !”

“*You* ?—No !” he responded, almost with a sneer. “Women can drone away their lives, for ever, in one place ! Their minds (if minds they have—which I have often doubted !)

find sufficient employment, in the discussion of furbelows; which can be carried on, just as well, in a little village, as in a bustling town!"

"You don't mean it, John!"

"Don't I?" he retorted, almost rudely. "I don't *generally* say, what I don't mean!—I think all women, brainless—heartless—at least, all, whom *I* have ever met!"

"You are sadly changed, John!"

"And *who* has changed me?" he asked, in a tone of such keen and bitter reproach, as smote her to the heart.

"True. I know it!" she replied, meekly, and patiently.

He was disarmed. There was a long silence; which he broke, by saying,—

"Helen, when I have left, will you forget, how harsh—how cruel—I have been?"

"I shall but remember, *who* made you only a little less kind and gentle, than you were." She answered.

"Nay, you reproach me!"

"Not so; your words were but the echo of my own thoughts."

After a pause, he said,—

"I am going away, Helen."

What knew he, of the sudden leap of the poor breaking heart, as he uttered the cruel words. She replied,—

"It is better for you, John;—you need change. Perhaps Brockley, though, to me, it seems so pleasant, is a dull place for a man. You will be happier, away."

He longed to throw himself at her feet—to tell her, that he loved her—hated himself;—yes, hated himself, for the fatal pride, which forbade him to take the penitent to his heart, because she had once rejected him; but he contented himself with replying,—

"Yes, Helen, I think you are right. I need change."

And, within a few days, all was arranged for his departure.

* * * * *

It was the last day. He and his mother were together. She was talking, most earnestly.

"My dear John, if you act under this most wicked impulse, you will never cease to regret it!"

"'Impulse?' It has been my fixed will and determination, ever since—since *that time*!"

"I am sorry to hear it. Do you think, that a blessing will follow such a determination?"

"She has wronged me!" he passionately exclaimed.

"Oh, John! can you harbour resentment, against that poor, broken-hearted girl?"

"No! may God for ever bless her! But, oh! mother, you don't know how *men* feel! You don't know, how they shrink from treatment, such as I have suffered!—how they rejoice, when the opportunity is afforded them, of proving, that they cannot be befooled, *twice*!"

"'Befooled,' John? Oh, no! Would our Helen treat you thus?"

"No, mother; she is all that is good, and noble, and upright! I worship—I adore her! She is as far above her former self, as—"

"And yet, John, you will give her up?"

"Yes."

"In so doing, you will suffer more, than you would suffer, from the imaginary condemnation of the world, if you married her. And, after all, who knows that you ever made her an offer? Thanks to her scheming mother's policy, the engagement was kept so secret, that no one knew of it."

"No; and if anyone *did* suspect it, my going away now, just as she has become a widow, and inherited a fortune, will convince them of their error!"

"And is that fortune the cause of your sudden change towards Helen?"

"It is."

"But for that, would you have made her your wife?"

"Possibly—if she would have had me."

"John, you are infatuated! You are acting insanely!"

"Be it so. My present insanity is wisdom, compared with my former madness!"

She saw, that he would not be persuaded. The next morning, he departed.



THE END.

THE wind was raging; and the sharp hail came rattling against the window-panes. Helen and Mrs. Howard sat before the fire, which threw its ruddy glow for several yards around. The rest of the room was in darkness; for, disinclined for occupation, lost in bitter memories, they had not ordered lights. So, there they sat, gazing mournfully into the embers.

But the mother's heart was very full; and, at last, the tears, that would keep swelling to her eyes, brimmed over, and fell heavily down her cheeks. And then came sob after sob, as if her heart were breaking.

Yet, what was her sorrow, compared with the desolation that was crushing the heart of that poor girl? But, so much affliction had been crowded into her short life, that she had learnt self-control; or, it may be, affliction had so schooled her into thinking of others, and rendering her own griefs subservient to theirs, that she was enabled to maintain an appearance of calm, while her spirit was writhing in agony. She gently knelt down beside Mrs. Howard, and laid her face in her lap. This mute token of sympathy, soothed her. She kissed the meek brow, and murmured,—

"My Helen!—my other child! *You* will never leave me?"

"But, if I did, he would return," she faltered. "I know that I have driven him away. He was very, very kind, and I knew that he forgave me; but the sight of me distressed him

—it reminded him of all that he once suffered on my account. He despised me—I felt it! He is better, away, while I am here. But I will not cast a blighting shadow over his happiness, and yours! I will leave you; and he shall never, never see me, again! In time, he will forget the past, and—and love some one, who will make him happy!”

Despite herself, she was weeping despairingly. Mrs. Howard could not reply; she only pressed her in her arms, and smoothed the hair back from her burning brow. In a little while, Helen resumed.—

“I have felt all this, for a long time; but I had not courage to leave—I felt, that I would rather die!”

“Leave?—no, my child,—indeed you must not. I could not bear to lose you!”

“How good you are, to forgive me!—Oh! how good!” And she wept again.—“But, I will tell you to-night (for I may not again have courage) how it happened—how it was, that I acted so treacherously by him and you—how I cast aside such happiness, as I have never known since then—shall never again know!”

“I loved him dearly—dearly;—more, than I had any notion of, at the time—more, than I have ever loved anyone—yes, better, even, than I loved my husband! When mamma told me, that I was to go to Staniswood, I shrank from the thought of leaving him; and was only reconciled to it, by the idea, that I should return to him, improved in appearance and manner—more worthy of his love—”

“Your mother told you so?”

“Yes. Well, I met Arthur. I felt flattered by the attention of so fine a gentleman (as I thought him); and encouraged—and even *sought*—his admiration. But I longed for John’s presence; and had not a thought, of more than flirtation, with Arthur. My vanity, alone, was gratified;—my heart remained untouched; nor do I believe that Arthur would have won me, had not my bad passions—vanity, envy, jealousy, selfishness—become enlisted in the conquest of his heart. The house was full of visitors. Amongst them, was a Miss Atherton, who, I immediately perceived, was determined to eclipse me with Arthur. She was richer than I, and could afford to heighten attractions, which were naturally

great, by dressing, to perfection; and I often felt bitterly mortified, by the glance of cold, disdainful pity, which she cast upon me. Either, Arthur was not insensible to her attractions; or else, he pretended to admire her, in order to pique me. However, I saw myself deserted, for her; and I resolved, at any cost, to have my revenge. Added to all this, I was, I confess, somewhat fascinated by Arthur;—but I did not *love* him;—no, I loved John—I was *infatuated*, by Arthur. And, all this time, I was living in a whirl of gaiety; I never had time for thought. And then, I took offence, at something in one of John's letters; it seemed dictatorial——”

“Did *you* think so; or, did your mother persuade you that it was so?”

“Mamma, and Mrs. Huntingdon, persuaded me.—Thus things went on. I was wretchedly unhappy. If Miss Ather-ton had left, I would at once have given up Arthur; but, as it was, I could not bear the thought of her triumph.”

“Well! at last, in an evil moment, he told me, that he loved me; and promised, that he would desert my rival, if I would bid him hope.—Alas! alas! I did so! After that, I tried to cast away thought; and I succeeded, in some measure, in stilling the upbraidings of my conscience—yes, until I returned to Brockley; but then, the old feelings seemed to come back to me, more strongly than ever. It seemed, to me, as if my visit to Staniswood, had been only a dream. (Would that it had!) How I dreaded, meeting John! How I wished, that, by some means or other, I could be freed from my new bonds! But, when we met, it was with sharp recrimination—with sarcastic words—with a mutual declaration, that we had been mistaken, in fancying we loved each other. Oh! pride!—pride!—but, for that, I should have confessed my weakness and instability, asked his pardon, and implored him to take me back—unworthy as I was—to his heart. For I loved him then—as I have ever done!”

“*Still*, Helen? Do you love him, still?”

For awhile, she could not speak, for sobbing. At last, she replied, in broken accents,—

“Still—still! I love him, now, as I never did, in my young and thoughtless days! I love him, as I could love no other upon earth!”

After a long silence, Helen entreated Mrs. Howard to go to rest.

"I cannot sleep—at least, not yet," she said. "Time, and prayer, will bring patience; but now, I am very wretched."

"I will remain with you, dear."

"No, no; it would distress me. I should think I was keeping you up. Do leave me!"

Mrs. Howard complied.

Helen was alone, wretched, but tearless. She had wept, till she could weep no more; and her heart ached, intolerably.

"How the storm rages!—and he, in it, perhaps!"

She advanced towards the window. But, with a faint exclamation, she started back; for, one stood there, half-shadowed by the curtains!

"Helen!—my life!"

Her terror was at an end. She was strained wildly to his heart. Words of tenderness, such as she had never hoped to hear again, flowed from his lips. She could only cling to his neck, and cry,—

"Thank God!—thank God!"

"My own! my dearest! my dearest! And, have I grieved you, so?"

"You will not leave, then?—You will not make me so wretched?"

"Leave?—Give up the priceless treasure of your love? No! though the whole world should learn, that you once rejected me, I would not—could not, leave you! What were the world's censure, compared with the torture I have this day endured? Every mile that placed itself between us, seemed but to form itself into one more link, that bound me to you! I reached the port, whence I was to embark. The raging of the storm forbade their putting to sea. Inaction was torture. Each moment, my passionate longing to see you once more, grew stronger and stronger. I would—I must—take one more look, before I left you for ever! (Nay, love, do not tremble, nor cling so wildly to me!—We never part more, on earth!) In the darkness, and amidst the noise of the elements, I entered this room unseen. I heard your tale—(my own! do not droop your head;—that confession ennobled you

—shamed *me!*—For the first time, I saw my pride appear, in all its hideous deformity; and I learnt, that you were lost to me, through my own miserable arrogance, and self-sufficiency!"

"No, no, John!—*I* was to blame—I, alone!"

"Will you forgive me, Helen? Will you trust to my word, that I will try to correct my faults—to render myself more worthy of you?"

"Worthy, John?—you are too good—too noble!—But," she timidly asked, "do you think, that you will, in time, learn to love me, as well as you did, in the dear old days?"

"*'As well,'* Helen?—*'as well!'* Nay, but ten thousand times better! I loved you, then, as the beautiful, capricious child.—I adore you, now, as the thoughtful, intellectual woman! I have watched you, Helen;—your patient struggle for submission—your meek endurance of wrong—your unselfish care for others—your blindness to their faults, and exaggerated estimate of your own—your patient sweetness, under sorrow, sickness, injustice; all, all, I have watched! and I worship you—pure saint that you are!—as I could worship no other woman! Helen, I could not live, without you!"

She had not courage to reprove him—his words made her so very happy! She still clung to him, as though she feared, that he might, even yet, be lost to her.

And so, we will leave them.

THE END.







